DOMESTIC AND COMMUNAL WORSHIP IN RURAL CHINESE SOCIETY: A FIELD STUDY IN NEW TERRITORIES, HONG KONG

A MASTER THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

BY

CHOR-ON LEUNG

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of domestic and communal worship in rural Chinese society. This thesis is based mainly upon field research carried out by the author himself in the past few years in various places of the New Territories of Hong Kong. In addition to the first hand data collected in the field, a lot of references are also quoted for comparative purpose. It should be noted that emphasis is put on both ethnographic description and analysis of folk religion rather than those of state religion.

At the beginning of this thesis, a critical review on C.K. Yang's functional classification of deities is given. Instead of a functional approach, a structural approach is employed which is found to be more heuristic and fruitful. A comprehensive description of religious practices of the common Hong Kong Chinese is presented, which is followed by analysis of the basic principles underlying the spatial classification of domestic and communal settings for worship. In addition, application of these basic principles is compared at different levels.

The last two chapters are devoted to rethinking of Chinese religion. Some basic concepts and mechanisms underlying Chinese religion, such as the problem of effectiveness and the concept of pollution, are clarified with support from concrete examples. Their significance in the understanding of Chinese religion is also discussed.

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Chor-on Leung

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INTRODUCTION

> "The ethnographer does not, and, in my opinion, largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they perceive "with" - or "by means of," or "through" ... or whatever the word should be. In the country of the blind, who are not as unobservant as they look, the one-eyed is not king, he is spectator." (Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge)

For the common Hong Kong Chinese, religious beliefs are incorporated in almost every aspect of their lives: altars dedicated to deities abound in temples, in domestic dwellings, in shops, and on street corners. The exact location and orientation of a grave on the hillsides should be determined by Fang-shui principles. The date for marriage, the opening of a shop, and the location of a new house must be checked with the Chinese almanac. Bets, business investments, are all matters whose outcome can be foretold at the temples.

Animistic rites are still commonly practised. Natural objects as well as artificial ones, such as trees, stones, walls, and doorways, are believed to be the dwelling places of spirits. Spiritualism is also prevalent. There are spiri' diums who are said to be

able to communicate with the dead. People may go to them to consult their dead kins. And in case of misfortune, the Chinese common man in Hong Kong may go to the fortune-teller or the spirit medium to ask about the causes and the remedial measures.

The yuan-chu-min or indigenous people of Hong Kong can be roughly divided into four different dialect groups, namely, the Punti, the Hakka, the Tanka and the Hoklo. The Punti are Cantonese-speaking Chinese whose ancestors came from various counties in the Guangdong Province. Most of the them were early immigrants to the Hong Kong region and so they live in the plains and possess more fertile fields. The Hakka are Hakka-speaking Chinese whose ancestors came from various counties in Fukien and Kiangsi. It is said that their ancestors originally came from the Central Plains of China. The word "Hakka" means "Guest People". Since the Hakka settled late in Hong Kong as compared with the Punti, most of them live on the hillsides. Both the Punti and the Hakka are land people who were mostly farmers in the New Territories in the old days.

The Tanka are boat people who are found along the coasts of Guangdong and Fukien. They speak Cantonese

which differs slightly from that of the Punti. In imperial China, Tanka people were discriminated against and they were forbidden to take the imperial public examinations. The Hoklo are also boat people whose ancestors came from the coastal area of Fukien or Chao-chou. They speak Fukienese and rarely mix with people of other dialect groups.

There are some differences in religious practices between these dialect groups. For example, whereas the ancestors are worshipped as individuals in the ancestral hall of Punti people, they are honoured collectively by a large tablet in the ancestral hall of Hakka people. The difference is greater between the religious practices of the land people and those of the boat people. However, basically they are still quite similar. In this thesis, emphasis will be put on the religious practices of the land people, while those of the boat people will be referred to if the comparison thus illustrated is especially significant and meaningful.

This thesis is based mostly upon fieldwork carried out in the past few years in various places of the New Territories of Hong Kong. Among the places being

studied, Kam Tsin is the one I will refer to most frequently.

Kam Tsin is a farming village located in the Sheung Shui District in the northern part of the New Territories. My fieldwork in the village was carried out between 1987 and 1988. The village was founded by the Haus, one of the "five great surnames" in the New Territories. It was written on the genealogy of the Haus [1] that the founding ancestors of the village first settled in Kam Tsin in the Qian-long reign (1736-1795) [2]. And according to the census reports given in several publications, the population of Kam Tsin was 240 in 1898 (Lockhart 1898:71), 182 in 1911 [3] and 460 in 1957 (HKGP 1960:209). At present, the population of the village is estimated to be 700 (Leung, Kwong-hon 1980:65). In the village, all the houses are neatly arranged in rows. The number of houses was about 124 in 1905 [4] and 272 in 1987 [5]. However, a lot of young people have left the village to seek employment outside and many of them have emigrated to England, Germany and Holland. Today, most of the houses, especially those old ones, are rented to tenants who come from outside.

In Kam Tsin, there is an ancestral hall which is

called Mei Fung Hau Kung Ci or the Ancestral Hall of Hau Mei Fung. This ancestral hall does not belong to the whole jia-zu of the Haus in Kam Tsin, but one of the fang only. Besides the ancestral hall, there is a village temple which is dedicated to Da-wang and Fu-de. Both Da-wang and Fu-de are functionally differentiated Earth Gods. Each year, a communal celebration is held at the temple on the birthday of Da-wang and Fu-de in the first lunar moon. Chinese operas are performed to entertain both the local deities and villagers. At the same time, a Hong-chao ritual is performed by a kind of Taoist priests locally known as naam-mo-lo.

Other major communities studied include Lam Tsuen, Pat Heung, Kau Sai and Tai O. Lam Tsuen and Pat Heung are village alliances locally known as xiang. Lam Tsuen is a xiang consisting of twenty-three member villages in which eighteen of them are inhabited exclusively by Hakka people and the rest by Punti people. The principal deity of the village alliance temple in Lam Tsuen is Tian-hou or the Heavenly Queen. In Lam Tsuen, a Da-jiao is held once every ten years. The Da-jiao, whose main purpose is to thank the local deities for their favour in the preceding years and to pray for continuous blessing in the coming year, is

performed by naam-mo-lo. In fact, it is the most spectacular and most expensive celebration in which all the villages of the alliance participate. The last Da-jiao celebrated in Lam Tsuen was held at the village alliance temple in 1981. On that occasion, I had a good chance to study the folk beliefs and ritual behaviour of the villagers.

Pat Heung is a xiang with twenty-five member villages of which eighteen are inhabited exclusively by Hakka people, six by Punti people, and one by both Hakka and Punti people [6]. In Pat Heung, there is a village alliance temple in which the principal deity is Guan-yin or the Goddess of Mercy. There is no Da-jiao communally celebrated by the xiang as a whole, but among the member villages of the xiang, Lin Fa Tai and Ngau Keng jointly celebrate their own Da-jiao once every five year, while Yuen Kong and Yuen Kong San Tsuen also have their own Da-jiao at intervals of eight years.

Whereas Lam Tsuen and Pat Heung are comprised of farming villages, Kau Sai and Tai O are fishing villages. In Kau Sai, there is a temple dedicated to Hong-sheng, a patron deity of seafarers. Each year,

Chinese operas are performed in front of the temple on the birthday of Hong-sheng. And like the case in Kam Tsin, a Hong-chao ritual is performed on this occasion by naam-mo-lo.

Tai O is a traditional fishing village lying at the western end of Lantau Island. There are several temples in the village, including a Hou-wang temple, a Hong-sheng temple, a Guan-di temple, and two Tian-hou temples. Celebrations are held on the birthdays of these deities and on the birthday of the Earth Gods. There are also some occasional rites and a Da-jiao performed by naam-mo-lo.

It should be noted here that the Da-jiao held in Lam Tsuen and some of the member villages of Pat Heung, as well as the Hong-chao held in Kam Tsin and Kau Sai, are all performed by a kind of Taoist priest locally known as naam-mo-lo or chanting fellows. Unlike the ordinary Taoist priests, the naam-mo-lo do not live in monasteries but among their countrymen. They perform many kinds of ritual for the folk. But, in fact, this is only their part-time job and they all also engage in ordinary occupations:

its members are (and were traditionally)

professional priests living in their homes, and not vegetarian or celibate. Like the Buddhist clerics, they are recruited through masters, have recorded genealogies (some of which I have seen in Singapore) and are grouped in pseudo-kinship relations with others, this relationship often forming the bases for teams performing rituals (as with the Buddhists). Such priests have often been part-time practitioners in the rural area ... (Topley 1968:26).

> Taoists of the kind known as Naam-moh Lo ... may approach gods of importance direct ... They also specialize in subduing demons, driving for their power on a group of beings called T'ien-chun "Heavenly Worthies" who are non-accessible to ordinary mortals ... (Topley 1967:104).

In the past, little work has been done on the study of the rituals performed by the naam-mo-lo in Hong Kong. We can only find occasionally very brief descriptions of these rituals in some books or local journals (for examples, Brim 1974:101; Hayes 1967:95; Hase 1982:4-5; Baker 1980:126-128).

Furthermore, there is no doubt that some rituals

like the Da-jiao and the Hong-chao have been neglected by many scholars in the past. It is not until recent years that intensive studies on these rituals have started (for examples, Obuchi 1980; Tanaka 1981, 1985; Law and Ward 1982; Hayes:1983; Leung, Chor-on 1984; Faure 1986; Hsu 1983). However, these rituals are quite common in the village world of Hong Kong. In fact, as I am going to point out in this thesis, these rituals have played significant roles in the structuring of village life in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 1 FOLK RELIGION IN CHINA

> "What is impossible is not the propinquity of the things listed, but the very site on which their propinquity would be possible." (Michel Foucault, The Order of Things)

The Classification of Gods or the God of Classification?

When I first read C. K. Yang's Religion in Chinese Society, I was impressed by a table found in Appendix I as well as the text concerned. The table, entitled "Functional Classification of Major Temples in Eight Localities", reads:

> Under the category of social organizations, temples concerning the family were mainly those of fertility cults such as the goddess of mercy (Kuan-yin) in the south ... Temples devoted to protection and welfare of the local community include such common cults as huo-shen for the prevention of fire. ... Temple cults that emphasized the operation of the state or political order included mainly deified personalities as symbols of civic, political, and military values. ... Temple cults devoted to the support of the

> general moral order of society included heavenly deities and underworld authorities. ... Temples related to economic life were dedicated to agricultural deities, who controlled the elemental forces and contributed to the cohesion of peasant communities; to patron gods and spirits of crafts and trade ... In the category of health, there were temples dedicated to deities specializing in medicine or in dispelling epidemics (Yang 1961:11-13).

What impressed me most is that the author has presented to his readers such a simple and neat functional classification of 1,786 major temples found in eight localities in Mainland China. In the text, it is explicitly stated that the temples are classified according to the nature of the main gods in each temple. But we may easily find that a lot of ambiguous criteria have been employed by Yang in the classification of the temples. To point out that there are indeed too many ambiguous cases, here I would like to reproduce in the following table part of the classification presented in Yang's book:

Table 1: Functional Classification of Major Temples in Eight Localities (Excerpts from C. K. Yang's Religion in Chinese Society, Appendix I)

Local community protection:

Huo-shen miao, Huo-ti miao, Hua-kuang miao (god of fire)
Shui-huo shen miao (gods of fire and flood)
Hai-shen miao (god of the sea, controller of tidal waves)
She-chi t'an (god of earth and grain)
etc.

Underworld authorities:

Ch'eng-huang miao (local ruler over spirits of the dead)
T'u-ti miao (local god of earth, a tutelary god)
etc.

Agricultural deities:

Feng-shen miao (god of wind)
Lei-shen miao, Lei-ti miao (god of thunder)
Hung-sheng miao (god of floods)
etc.

From Table 1, we can find that She-ji (She-chi) or the God of Earth and Grain is classified under the functional category "local community protection". Obviously, as the name "God of Earth and Grain" itself implies, She-ji is conceived as closely associated with the fertility of the soil and the harvest of agricultural products. And, as we will see later,

shrines dedicated to She-ji abound in most farming villages in the New Territories of Hong Kong. Therefore, is it equally justified, or even more appropriate, if She-ji is classified under the functional category "agricultural deities"?

Now let us go on to another ambiguous case. Here I would like to query whether it is the best way to classify Tu-di (T'u-ti) or the Earth God under the functional category "underworld authorities"? Undoubtedly, one of the many duties of Tu-di is to police the ghosts (Wolf 1974:134, Wen 1981:81) and to look after the souls of the newly dead. For example, when someone dies, his family members would inform the local Tu-di about the death and beg the Tu-di to show his kindness towards the soul of the deceased (Dore 1914:45, Johnston 1910:371). But, on the other hand, Tu-di is also conceived by folk as a kind of God of Wealth (Moore 1913:66; Shen 1979:104, Qian-lung-ju-shi 1976:58). The image of Tu-di is often found to be an old, kind man with an gold ingot in his left hand. In fact, as many scholars have already noted, Tu-di has many diversified functions:

> It would better describe his functions if he were

called Territory God. Basically his task is to oversee and protect all the people who live within his territory (Baker 1979a:1).

he is usually called Earth God or Guardian Spirit in English. ... Anyone can solicit the resident guardian spirit of his own locality either to keep him informed about what is going on (especially to report a birth or death in his 'patch') or to ask for help in sickness or distress (Law and Ward 1982:33).

Therefore, why is Tu-di grouped under the functional category "underworld authorities"? Why not put it into other categories like "local community protection" or "blessing deities" coined by Yang himself, or even some others? We find no convincing answer for his preference in Yang's book.

Finally, let us look at one more case. I wonder why Shui-huo Shen or the Gods of Fire and Flood and Hong-sheng (Hung-sheng) or the God of Floods are classified by Yang under different categories, with the former being grouped under the functional category "local community protection" whereas the latter are conceived as a kind of "agricultural deity"? In fact,

Hong-sheng or the God of Floods is "a patron of seafarers" (Law and Ward 1982:33) or "a benefactor of seafarers" (Modder 1983:24). In Yang's book, once again we find no satisfactory explanation because he has never stated in explicit terms how he learnt about the nature of the main gods in each temple and how he, being the "God of Classification", justified his own preference in classifying the deities. This problem is also noted by Philip Baity who writes:

> But Yang's functionalism was based largely on the manifest specialized functions of the gods. Such an approach, however well founded on the mainland, has little utility in Taiwan, where most deities have multiple functions; therefore I have rejected it (Baity 1975:3).

In fact, the main reason why "Yang's functionalism" is not applicable in the Taiwanese case is not quite the same as Baity thinks. Yang himself surely knows about the weakness of his functional approach when he writes:

> The classification of temples according to function ... is relative, not absolute, due to the multifunctional nature (ma /- if not most, of

> the cults. ... Even for certain national cults, the names and at times the functions of the same god vary from place to place (Yang 1961:10-11).

Obviously enough, it is Yang's eagerness to present a simple and neat functional classification which has concealed the fact that some deities have multiple functions.

If there exist so many ambiguities in the criteria used to classify the temples, it implies that, to a certain extent, we can have freedom to formulate many equally justified variants of the classification. Now what would happen to the statistical figures, the dependent variable which is a function of the criteria being used? Surely, these statistical figures, together with the arguments derived from them, will change accordingly in different equally justified variants of the classification. Then what can we learn from such a "flexible" classification? Furthermore, what are the insights into the conceptual reality of the Chinese people we can gain from this classification provided by the anthropologist himself?

Chinese Religion: A Melange of Various Traditions

The nature of religion in China has long been a controversial issue. Many writers recognize three traditions as the components of Chinese religion, namely, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. They have called these religious traditions "the three religions of China" (for example, Soothill 1929).

As noted by some other writers (for example, Chan 1953:140-141), the term is in fact inappropriate and misleading. In the first place, Chinese religion includes not only the three traditions, but also some others such as witchcraft and divination which existed in Chinese culture long before the rise of indigenous Taoism and the introduction of Buddhism to China. Furthermore, the term "the three religions of China" denotes that the three traditions are all religions. However, Confucianism is a school rather than a sect. Finally, the term implies that the three traditions are distinctive and independent in Chinese religion.

In fact, Chinese religion is not only a common meeting-ground for Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, animism, fetishism and others, it is indeed "the

melange of animism, Tao-Buddhist scraps and patches, folk-myth and magic and long centuries of supernatural practices" (Bloomfield 1983:36). Whether indigenous or imported, these traditions have been inextricably mixed to such an extent that sorting them out into single systems is confusing, immensely complex and perhaps practically impossible. In some cases, even the priests themselves may have difficulty to identify frankly which religious tradition they belong to.

It is not the clear-cut philosophical guidance or religious doctrine of a single tradition with which the common Chinese deal, but the *melange* of all these traditions. And as so many variations will be found, it is hard to state with precision popular beliefs about heaven, hell, the afterlife, and the supernatural world. In fact, the folk may hold at the same time contradictory views of these things. And in this eclecticism the Chinese are by no means always critical. As some writers noted, the average Chinese "has long been and still is an animist, a Buddhist, a Confucianist, and a Taoist with no sense of incongruity or inconsistency" (Latourette 1934:611-612).

Associated with this eclecticism, tolerance is a

typical characteristic of the Chinese attitude towards religion. A man may have a favourite deity to whom he constantly prays and makes sacrifices, but on occasions he may go to other deities for some specific purpose or he may go to a temple just when he drops by. It has been pointed out that the Chinese in relation to their gods are rather like consumers who want to get the best return for their money. Otherwise, they will shop elsewhere (Bloomfield 1983:38). In this sense, the Chinese approach to religion is essentially practical and pragmatic. To a great extent, the deities seem to be bound to serve the people who worship them.

However, it should be noted that the common Chinese is neither a theologist nor a philosopher. Although his life "was heavily colored by a shadowy world of gods, spirits, and specters" (Yang 1961:3), it is not a surprise that he may know little about his deities and his religion.

Throughout Chinese history, all the religious traditions have received, to various degrees, continual impacts from other aspects of Chinese [illegible] and society such as politics, economy, morality and ethics. It is remarked that political suppression [illegible] gious

organizations has taken place in every major period. For example, several times in Chinese history, the state prohibited witchcraft and divination, prosecuted Taoist movements, forbade people from becoming monks and nuns, and destroyed Buddhist temples (for example, Yang 1957:284-286). But the motivation of such religious suppression has been based mainly on practical or political reasons rather than theological or theoretical ones. In fact, most of these suppression lasted only for a certain period and never succeeded in eradicating the existing religious organizations or preventing the rise of new sects.

Besides these impacts from other cultural or social aspects, each of the religious traditions has also received the mutual influence from each other. Tolerance has long been the attitude of Buddhism and Taoism towards Confucianism. But in return, Buddhism and Taoism have been criticized or even prosecuted, though not too severely, by the serious Confucianists.

It should be stressed that Chinese religion is not just a haphazard collection of several religious traditions. It is, in reality, an integrated system resulting from long cent ie o a similation and

transformation. And I am convinced that it is the dynamic interactions and the degree of integration within this system, rather than the endless debate on the origin and the distinction of "the three religions of China", that is more heuristic and promising.

It has been argued that, instead of reducing the religion of the Chinese people to its original components, it is more close to the reality and more useful for the purpose of analysis to divide it into two traditions, the tradition of the folk and the tradition of the enlightened or the elites, including the Confucianists, the Mandarins, the officials and scholars. These two categories correspond respectively to the "little tradition" and the "great tradition" (Redfield 1965). However, the study of the relationship between the great tradition and the little tradition has also resulted in controversial findings and endless debates.

Applying the structure-functional approach to Chinese society, Yang makes a dichotomy between institutional religion and diffused religion. Institutional religion, [illegible] system of theology, worship, rituals, and organization, is

independent of other secular social institutions. In fact, institutional religion is a social institution by itself. But in diffused religion, its theology, worship, rituals, and organization are so intimately diffused into one or more secular social institutions that they become an integral part of the latter, and have no significant independent existence (Yang 1961:20; 294-295).

Accordingly, institutional religion in China includes the major religious traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism, religious societies and cults of professional magicians and sorcerers. They function independently as separate systems rather than as part of the secular social institutions. On the other hand, diffused religion, such as ancestral worship and the worship of community deities, functions as part of the secular social institutions and relies upon the latter "for the supply of gods, spirits, and other symbols of worship, for the devising of rituals and sacrifice, and for the services of technically trained personnel, the priests" (Yang 1961:295). However, it seems that what Yang labels as institutional religion and diffused religion, to a great extent, [illegible] to what we call

state religion or that which belongs to the great tradition, and folk religion or that which belongs to the little tradition, respectively. Therefore the nature of the exact relationship between the two traditions remains unexplained.

A great deal of the writings on traditional Chinese religion deal mainly with religion which belongs to the great tradition, we still know little about religion which belongs to the little tradition or the "common Chinese" who constitute the great majority of China's population. In fact, Chinese religion "has not been the creation of a few individuals but a gradual evolution out of the spiritual life of a great number of simple folk" (Chan 1953:137). It is, to a great extent, a religion of the folk. In this thesis, much emphasis will be put on the study of Chinese folk religion than on that of the state religion.

CHAPTER 2 THE DOMESTIC SETTING FOR WORSHIP

> "At one time anthropologists studied savages in contrast to civilized men; we now find ourselves studying the thought processes of practical, ordinary people as distinct from those of technical professionals." (Edmund Leach, Dialectic in Practical Religion)

Shen-lou

When you enter a traditional dwelling in the New Territories of Hong Kong, the most conspicuous thing that will immediately catch your attention is a shrine which is, in almost all cases, placed directly facing the main entrance. This shrine is literally known as shen-kan and it is called "thia:-tau" (Feuchtwang 1974:107) in Taiwan. But locally, it is commonly known as shen-lou.

The most common type of shen-lou we find in Hong Kong is usually a rectangular wooden structure of about two meters high which consists of three partitions. However, only the uppermost partition and the lowest partition are designed to be used as shrines, whereas the middle one is usually a cupboard in which incense, candles and ritual papers are stored. Very often, the

whole structure or at least the inner surface is painted red, which is the colour of auspiciousness or sacredness in Chinese colour symbolism.

The Ancestors

Inside the uppermost partition of the shen-lou, two incense burners are usually installed with one on the left side and the other one on the right side. The left one sighting from the shen-lou is installed for the worship of ancestors whereas the right one is dedicated to other major deities being worshipped.

Inside the uppermost shrine, the ancestors are referred to by an inscribed wooden tablet or a slip of paper "tablet". Regardless of what material it is made of, the tablet is always red in colour and the characters inscribed or written on it are in black or gold. Ideally, wooden tablets should be made of chestnut wood (Baker 1981:86). However, it should be noted that ancestors are never represented by statues inside the shen-lou, though sometimes their photos, carefully kept in photo frames, may be put in front of the tablet dedicated to them.

According to Doolittle (1865a:222), the ancestral tablet is usually worshipped only for three or five generations. After the third or the fifth generation has passed away, the tablets which represent them are sometimes taken away from the domestic shrine and buried in or near the graves of the persons they represent, or they may be burned. Hugh Baker (1980:6) also states that, for most of the Chinese, little attempt seems to have been made to worship ancestors beyond four or five generations back in the home.

However, Kam Tsin is an exception to this practice. In the village, many people post a large piece of red paper tablet on the domestic shrine of the family to be used as an ancestral tablet. On the paper tablet, a typical statement is written which means "altar for the ancestors of all generations of the Hau surname of Sheung Kuk Tong. The names of some of the more recent and more closely related ancestors are written on the sides of the statement. These ancestors are mainly those which belong to the direct line of ancestry with regard to the father of that family. For each ancestor, his name, his generation number, and the surname(s) of his wife or wives are also given. It should be noted that in almost all of the cases found

in the village, the ancestors listed on each of the paper tablet belong to more than five consecutive generations.

Since paper tablets are more convenient for replacement or addition of new names than wooden tablets, it seems that they should be preferred by those who would put the names of their ancestors on the tablets in their domestic shrines. But the popular practice we can find now is that a wooden tablet with only a general statement is found. For example, if "Chen" the surname of the householder, the general statement would be "Chen-men tang-shang li-dai zu-xian" which means "the ancestors of all generations of the Chen surname". For those whose surnames are more popular, they can in fact easily find a ready-made wooden tablet of this type, with the surname already inscribed on it, from a shop in which ritual papers, incense and candles are sold.

In Kam Tsin, there is another finding which deserves a detailed description here. It is found that the names of the ancestors listed on the paper tablet are arranged in an orderly way according to generation seniority first. Then, if some of them belong to the

same generation, they are arranged according to the order of birth. The order of arrangement of the names can be formulated as follows: (1) from the central position to the peripheral position of the paper tablet; and (2) alternating appearance on the left side and the right side of the paper tablet, with the left side first. Here we find that two sets of positional binary opposition, namely, the contrast between "center" and "peripheral", "left" and "right", are chosen as the criteria used in the manifestation of the order of arrangement.

One saying in Chinese belief is that the soul is composed of two major elements . One of these is completely spiritual and would go to the underworld after death to await judgment. It then goes through purgatory in the underworld, and is reborn or goes to heaven after that. The other element would remain concerned with earthly affairs. It is this "earthly soul", as Hugh Baker (1964:38) calls it, that is involved in ancestral worship. Part of this earth-bound soul takes up its seat in the ancestral tablet and the other part resides in the grave.

To the Chinese, parental love and filial piety are

not terminated by death. It is widely believed that the spirit of the dead will protect and ensure the prosperity of his living descendants. On the other hand, it is the duty of the living descendants to honour and to make offerings to their dead. Accordingly, if departed family spirits are not ceremoniously revered, their wrath will be directed at their descendants.

In Taiwan, there are examples where the souls of the dead visit their living family members or relatives and bring trouble to them in the form of illness or misfortune. They do so to make their plight or accusation of the failure to perform ancestral worship known. But for the Chinese in Mainland China, Francis Hsu stated that he knew of "no belief that ancestral spirits would ever bring disasters to their own descendants" (Hsu 1983:26).

In his study on spirit mediumship in Ping Shan in the New Territories, Jack Potter (1974) found several cases in which the soul of a child who had died in his (or her) youth returned to the family and brought trouble to the parents. In one of the cases, a mother had been bothered by the restless soul of her younger

son who had been executed by the Japanese. The result was fatal. The mother soon become ill both physically and mentally, and died less than a year after her son's execution (Potter 1974:209).

An interesting point in Potter's study is that the souls of young people seems to be more dissatisfied and more malevolent than those of old people. The former used to accuse their parents of not taking care of them, either before or after their death. For example, through the spirit medium, the soul of a girl spoke:

> "When I took sick you did not call a doctor; after I became seriously ill you finally called one, but by then it was too late and I died." (ibid., p. 210)

It should be noted that the souls of those who die without descendants would not be worshipped at the domestic shrine. Some jia-zu in the New Territories, such as the Kwoks of Lin Fa Tei in Pat Heung, have the practice of installing ancestral tablets inside their ancestral halls to honour those who die without descendants. But in other cases, these orphan souls are totally neglected and would therefore suffer a lot in the afterlife. Being tortured with hunger and

lack of care, these orphan souls would become angry, malevolent and vengeful. They are more likely to cause trouble to people. This may be the reason why the souls of young people seems to be more dissatisfied and more malevolent.

I came across an interesting case in Kam Tsin. The family members of a dead new-born male felt that the baby's soul was discontented with the fact that he was not taken care of. I was told that the soul of the baby often expressed his discontent by causing trouble, including illness, to his family members. Finally, the family decided to placate the baby's soul by adding his name at the right end of the paper ancestral tablet which was posted inside their shen-lou.

The Major Deities

The major deities worshipped at the shen-lou are usually represented by wooden or glazed porcelain statues. In some other cases, they are referred to by pictures or a slip of red paper with their names and their honorific titles written on it. For the land people, the most popular deities worshipped at the

shen-lou include Guan-di or the God of Martial Arts, Guan-yin or the Goddess of Mercy, Qi-tian Da-sheng or the Monkey God and Huang Da-xian or the Red Pine Fairy.

The fishing people in Hong Kong also install the shen-lou in their boats. As we would expect, the most popular major deity worshipped inside their shen-lou is Tian-hou or the Heavenly Queen, the patron deity of the fishing people.

The fishing people of Hong Kong have a particular set of statues called jia-xian or domestic fairies for those who die before they are married. Since they do not have their own descendants, they are deprived of ancestral status and they could not have their names written on the tablet. Instead they are referred to by statues which are placed, alongside the tablet for their ancestors and other major deities. If it is a boy who dies before he gets married, the typical statue is in the form of a young general holding a sword in his right hand and stepping on a dragon with his left foot and a tiger with his right foot. If it is a girl, the typical statue is one of a young lady wearing a robe and riding on a crane.

Di-zhu

Inside the lowest partition of the shen-lou, an altar is dedicated to Di-zhu or the Earth God of the House. In most cases, the altar is set up with just an incense burner and a tablet. The tablet is either a red wooden one or a piece of red paper and the characters inscribed or written on it are in black or gold. The typical statements on the tablet are in two columns. The statement on the right reads "Wu-fang Wu-tu Long-shen" which means "the Dragon Gods of the Five Directions and the Five Soils" and the left one reads "Qian-hou Di-zhu Ca.-shen" which means "the Land Lord of the Front and the Back the God of Wealth".

Di-zhu is a kind of functionally differentiated Tu-di or Earth God exclusively belonging to that particular household. However, there are different interpretations of the identity of the Wu-fang Wu-tu Long-shen. They have been interpreted by some people as Earth Gods. For example:

> Earth Gods each belong to one of five different spiritual divisions named after the Five Directions (North, East, South, West and Center),

and because of this there are also Earth Gods with names like Dragon God of the Five Directions and Five Soils (Baker 1979a:2).

In fact, we cannot even find the term "Wu-fang Wu-tu Long-shen" in classical references. We can only find the term "Wu-fang zhu Shen" or "the Gods of the Five Directions"[2] which, according to some references[4], is just another term for the Wu-di or the Five Emperors. Gou-mang is the God of the East who rules Spring; Zhu-rong is the God of the South who rules Summer; Hou-tu is the God of the Centre who rules Mid-Summer; Ru-shou is the God of the West who rules Autumn; and Yuan-ming is the God of the North who rules Winter.

But since Di-zhu, as a kind of Earth God, possesses a very low rank in the spiritual hierarchy, whereas the Wu-fang zhi Shen are gods with much higher ranks, it seems unlikely that their titles would be written side by side on the same tablet. Moreover, the tablet must be enshrined in the lowest partition of the shen-lou. This kind of setting in which the shrine must be kept touching the ground is a typical characteristic of the shrine for Earth Gods because

Earth Gods, as their name implies, are mainly concerned with the earth. Therefore, at least to the folk who probably know nothing about the Wu-fang zhi Shen, the Wu-fang Wu-tu Long-shen are just other differentiated Earth Gods:

> In the life of the Chekiang farmers, adjustment will be made not only to the chief earth tutelaries in the above-mentioned forms, but also to Mother Earth taken in her parts of divisions: - the five great mountains as sources of the rivers and streams; the groves or forests; and the five directions and the five seasons. Therefore among the numerous ma-chang specimens we can recognize and understand the Wu Fang Wu T'u or Wu Fang Ti Chu Shen Chun as the spirits of the five directions (Day 1940:66).

And it seems that what is called Di-zhu in Hong Kong is the counterpart of the Foundation Spirit found in Taiwan which is variously known as "Te Ki Co" (Feuchtwang 1974:114) or "Ti Chi Chu" (Wang, Sung-hsing 1974:188-189). In fact, the worship of Di-zhu can be traced back to the worship of the Zhong-liu, "the oldest central ground-deity of the most primitive

Chinese hut" (Day 1940:59).

The Stove God

Almost every Chinese family installs an altar for Zao-jun or the Stove God in the kitchen. The altar is usually kept in the proper place above the stove. Sometimes, it is hung on the back wall behind the stove or, as in the case of a more traditional village house where there is a large stove and a chimney made of bricks, it is placed on a small stair on the chimney breast. The altar is usually blackened and greasy with smoke and oil.

The altar can be made of a variety of materials, including wood, paper and bamboo. In most cases, the altar simply consists of a tablet and an incense burner. In other cases, an oil lamp and two sets of cups containing tea and wine respectively may also be found. In Hong Kong, people seldom install a picture of the Stove God in any form.

The tablet for the Stove God is either a red wooden one or a piece of red paper. The statement inscribed or written on the tablet may be "Ding-fu Zao-

jun" or "the Stove God Who Allots Measure of Happiness", or in a more detailed form as: "Si-ming Ding-fu Zao-jun zhi Shen-wei" or "Altar for the Stove God who Determines One's Life and Allots Measure of Happiness". Accordingly, the Stove God had the power to decide how long a life each member of the household should have. However, it should be noted that he is only one of those spiritual beings who can control over a person's life span. For example, the God of Longevity is yet another popular deity who can grant extra years of life to a person who deserves it.

Zao-jun is often translated as the Kitchen God and sometimes as the Hearth God. But, the Chinese word "zao" means "stove", rather than "kitchen". Therefore Stove God is a better translation for Zao-jun. The worship of the Stove God dates back over 2,000 years. According to the Li-ji or the Book of Rites, a book of the Confucian school that records a lot of creeds and customs before the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.), the worship of the Stove God was classified as one of the Seven Worships (or Five Worships according to another version) of the state. At that time, the Stove God was worshipped both by the state and the folk. According to the Shi-ji or the Records of History, the Han-shu or

the Book of Han, and the Hou-Han-shu or the Book of Late Han, the worship of the Stove God was very popular in both the great tradition and the little tradition during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.).

Before the Han dynasty, there were two different versions concerning the origin of the Stove God. In one version, either Yen-di or the Fire Emperor, or Zhu-rong or the God of Fire, the two legendary persons who were closely related to fire in Chinese mythology, were regarded as the Stove God. For example, in Huai-nan-zi, a Taoist book which was completed during the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 25 A.D.), it was written as follows: "The Fire Emperor invented the method to make fire and was worshipped at the stove after his death." And according to another passage in Huai-nan-zi, Zhu-rong was ordained the God of Fire after his death and was worshipped as the Stove God. Much later, when a special god of fire appeared in the Chinese pantheon, the Stove God became a family god and the protector of the hearth.

It is widely believed that on the twenty-fourth of the twelfth lunar month, the Stove God will ascend to heaven and make his annual report on the behaviour of

the members of each household. He thus acts as a "heavenly spy" or "heavenly inspector" on people's conduct. He returns on New Year's Eve and is welcomed with offerings. With this power to control the welfare of the household, the Stove God becomes "the indispensable patron of every home" (Day 1940:87).

Some scholars of Taiwanese studies point out that "division of the stove is synonymous with family division" (Wang, Sung-hsing 1974:186) and the household is, in fact, tied into a religious hierarchy through the Stove God:

> We can see that each Kitchen God shrine is the defining focus for a household in respect of its commensality. A separate household usually has a separate kitchen, and its Tsao Chun shrine is physically distant from those of related households; but two or more households may in some circumstances share a kitchen, and then the cooking place with its own shrine becomes the locus of differentiation. By the worship of this deity the domestic unit is linked into the hierarchy of groups with gods that gives Chinese bureaucracy its religious aspect (Freedman

1970:165).

However, it seems that no comparable study in the Hong Kong region has yet been reported. It is only reported in a case study of rural villagers in Hong Kong who had been resettled in a market town that the villagers had a ceremony at the very end of their stay in the village in which the Stove God was sent back to Heaven (Berkowitz 1975:6).

The Door Gods

According to an ancient Taoist legend which tells us the origin of the Door Gods, in remote antiquity there were two brothers, Shen-tu and Yu-lei, who lived under an enormous peach tree on Mount Du-shuo. They protected people by binding the wicked spirits with reeds and throwing them to feed the tigers. It is said that in ancient times the Chinese magistrates used to put carved peach wood images of Shen-tu and Yu-lei beside the ya-men (government office in ancient China) gate (Law and Ward 1982:18).

A quite different story says that the Emperor Tai-zong of the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) once suffered

from nightmares about being attacked by demons and spirits. One night two of his generals, Qin Shu-bao and Qu-Chi Jing-te, asked for his permission to let them keep watch standing in his room throughout the night. That night Tai-zong experienced no more terrible nightmares. Later he commanded the court painter to draw two portraits of the generals standing in full armour with a battle-axe in their hands, and a whip, chain, bow and arrows girded on their loins. These portraits were suspended on the right and left doors of the palace. Later, the same method, with some modifications, was adopted by the folk. This made Qin Shu-bao and Qu-Chi Jing-te the tutelary gods of the doorways. In folk religion, the former was, and is, depicted with a white face and the latter with a black face.

The Door Gods are guarantors of domestic peace and safety. New pairs of their coloured portraits are pasted on the doors during the last few days of the year. Sometimes the characters "wen-cheng" and "wu-wei" are written instead on two rectangular pieces of red paper which are posted on the doors.

In Hong Kong, people do not put up a tablet for

the Door Gods. In ancestral halls, temples and some houses, a small tube-like incense burner is hung on each side of the front door. Sometimes no incense burner is used at all and the incense sticks are inserted into gaps and small holes on both sides of the doorway. In other cases, only portraits of the Door Gods are posted on the doors and no incense is offered at all.

Tian-gung Ci-fu

Tian-gung Ci-fu or the Heavenly Official Who Bestows Blessings is one of the important Gods of Wealth. The altar dedicated to him is usually kept on the outer wall on the left side of the main doorway. The altar is simple, with just a tablet and an incense burner. The tablet is a red wooden board or just a piece of red paper. The most typical inscription on the tablet is "Tian-gung Ci-fu".

Men-kou Tu-di

Men-kou Tu-di or the Earth God of the Doorway is

another kind of differentiated Earth God. As the name already implies, Men-kou Tu-di is worshipped at the men-kou or doorway. The altar, simply consisting of a tablet and an incense burner, is often located on the right side of the doorway. And as a differentiated Earth God, his altar is left on the ground. The tablet is usually a red wooden board or a piece of red paper and the inscription on it reads "Men-kou Tu-di Cai-shen" or "the Earth God of the Doorway the God of Wealth".

In Tai O, the Men-kou Tu-di is often represented by a stone. The stone, which is completely or partially painted red in most cases, is cemented on the ground on the right side of the doorway. Furthermore, it is interesting that the stone is often enshrined with an awning-like shelter made of a sheet of iron plate. Being enshrined with an awning-like shelter, the Men-kou Tu-di looks as if it is installed in a fishing boat.

Exorcist Arrangements

It is thought that evil spirits can only move

straight forward and can be deflected by being forced to make a right-angled turn. Hence a spirit screen in the form of a wall may be built in the pathway leading up to the house to guard the entrance from malevolent spirits. This kind of spirit screen is often found in relatively more sacred buildings such as temples and ancestral halls, in particular, when a straight road gives access to the building.

A simpler type of screen with a similar function is in the form of a slab of granite or a wooden block inscribed with the statement "Tai-shan shi-qan-dang" or "This stone from Mount Tai dares bear them". It is usually hung on or inserted in the outer-wall near the main entrance.

A wooden block with a small circular mirror circumscribed by the eight trigrams is often hung on the lintel of the front door to turn back the evil spirits and other malignants. Sometimes just a concave mirror is used instead.

Another common potent devil-exorcist is Zi-wei Da-di or the Great Emperor of the Purple Planet. A rectangular wooden block with a figure of Zi-wei Da-di and a small mirror circumscribed by a Ba-qua or the

Eight Trigrams is sometimes hung on the lintel of the front door. The deity is represented as mounted on a Pekinese dog and carrying in his right hand his talismanic seal with the inscription "Zi-wei Zheng-zhao" or "(the Great Emperor of) the Purple Planet looks straight". Sometimes a similar wooden block with the figure of another devil-exorcist, Yuan-tan, is used instead. Yuan-tan has a black face and is always represented as mounted on a tiger.

Other exorcist arrangements which are commonly found hanging on the lintel of the front door include three-prong forks, talismans and traditional Chinese fans. All these are thought to be capable of preventing evil things from entering the house.

Symbolic Classification of Space in the Domestic Setting

The spatial arrangement of the shrines in domestic worship is a manifestation of the mental mapping of the domestic deities in the Chinese pantheon. In fact, externalization and materialization of the Chinese pantheon are most obvious in the settings of images in

domestic shrines and temples, as well as in the settings for ritual performances. By analyzing these settings, we may tap a major portion, and certainly the most important portion, of the Chinese pantheon embedded in the minds of the common Chinese.

Furthermore, from these studies we can find out the basic principles or "cultural code" (Munn 1973:581) the Chinese have employed in spatial classification. By manipulating some categories organized through the operation of several sets of binary opposition in spatial classification simultaneously, the relative positions of the domestic deities in the Chinese pantheon are clearly expressed. As the contrasts in spatial orientation are used to express basic attitudes, values and meanings, that is to say, to communicate, the contrasts themselves must be obvious, simple and commonly accepted, so that the messages conveyed by them will not be wrongly perceived or left unperceived. In fact, as we will find out soon, the contrasts employed in the differentiation of spatial orientation are mainly a few sets of binary oppositions which possess all the features I have just mentioned. That is to say, the requirement of parsimony is met.

The first employed by the common Chinese in spatial classification is the binary opposition indoor/outdoor. In domestic worship, whereas the shrines for the ancestors, the major deities, the Di-zhu and the Stove God are all located indoors, those for the Tian-gung Ci-fu, the Men-kou Tu-di and the Door Gods are all located outdoors.

The second set of binary oppositions employed is central/peripherial. The shrines for the ancestors, the major deities and the Di-zhu are all installed inside the shen-lou which is commonly placed at the central position of the house. Relatively, the other shrines are all at peripheral positions.

The third set of binary oppositions is high/low. This binary opposition is probably the most important principle used in the symbolic representation of space. As Richard Davis (1984:98) notes, this referential axis is reflected with particular clarity in ritual behavior. In our case, except for the shrines dedicated to the Di-zhu and the Men-kou Tu-di which are placed on the ground, all the others are placed in a position some distance above the ground level. As we have already seen, since both the Di-zhu and the Men-

kou Tu-di are differentiated Tu-di or Earth Gods, the close association of their shrines with the ground is highly reasonable.

The fourth set of binary oppositions is left/right. In traditional Chinese domestic worship, whereas the shrine dedicated to the Tian-gung Ci-fu should be on the left side of the doorway, the one to the Men-kou Tu-di should be on the right side. And inside the shen-lou, the incense burner on the left is for the ancestors and that on the left is for the major deities. It should be noted that this binary opposition does not apply to the spatial orientations of the other deities, which can be differentiated from each other just by applying the first three sets of binary opposition.

By using these four sets of binary oppositions, which are employed by the Chinese in the spatial classification of domestic altars, we can in fact work out a schematic representation of the spatial orientation of the pantheon in domestic worship (see Table 2). Each of the deities is attributed a set of "distinctive features", to borrow Roman Jakobson's term, which sets him apart from the others.

Table 2: Schematic Representation of the Spatial Orientation of the Pantheon in Domestic Worship

	Indoor	Central	High	Left
The Ancestors	+	+	+	+
The Major Deities	+	+	+	−
Di-zhu	+	+	−	0
The Stove God	+	−	+	0
The Door Gods	−	−	+	0
Tian-gung Ci-fu	−	−	+	+
Men-kou Tu-di	−	−	−	−

In the schematic representation of the pantheon given above, attributions to structural differentiations in spatial orientation, rather than to functional diversification, are employed. As we can see, whereas attributions to functional diversification may overlap to a certain extent, structural differentiations in spatial orientation are polarized in the mental mapping of the pantheon as well as in the manifestations through which the pantheon is externalized and materialized. So it is the latter which can provide us with a distinctive representation

of the pantheon.

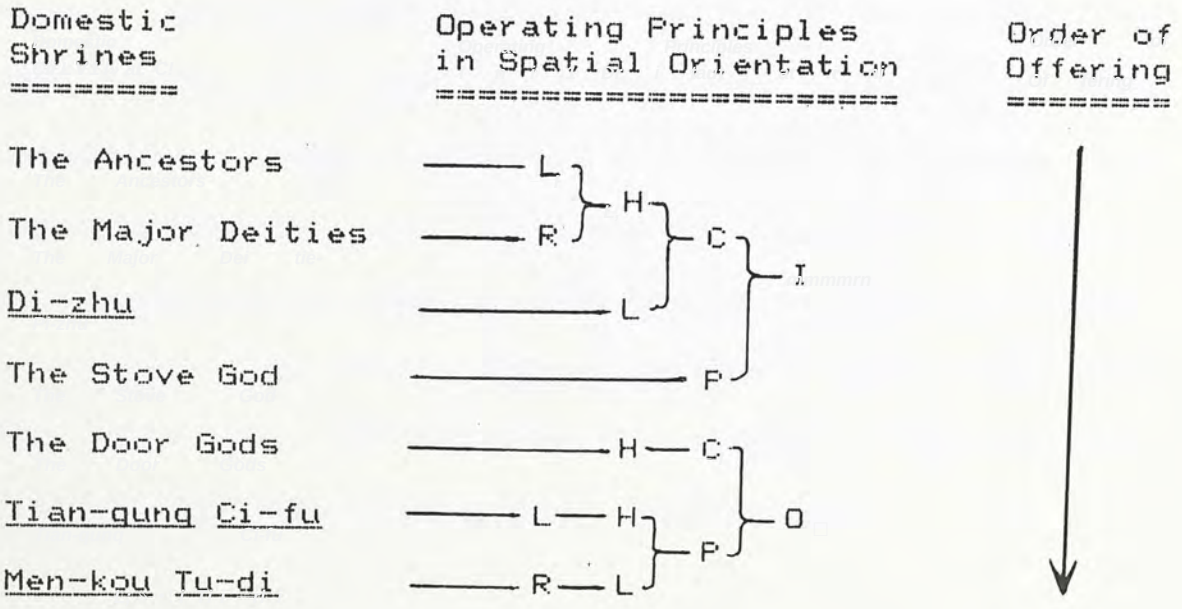
The schematic representation of the pantheon given above is a paradigmatic one in which only spatial factors, but not processual factors, are considered. Now let us look at a syntactic representation of the pantheon in which processual factors are the determinative ones.

In Chinese domestic worship, a routine ritual process is performed daily in order to express respect and gratitude to the deities concerned. This minor ritual, locally known as shen-lou or inserting incense, is simply an offer of burning incense twice or thrice a day. The Chinese believe that the smoke from the burning incense can ascend, together with the respect and gratitude expressed by the worshipper who offers the incense, to heaven. The number of incense sticks inserted into an incense burner is usually an odd number because, for the Chinese, odd numbers are thought to be auspicious especially in addressing deities.

The offering of incense to the domestic deities in the process of shen-lou usually follows a definite order of sequence, starting with the offering to the

ancestors, then followed by those to the minor deities, the Di-zhu, the Stove God, the Door Gods, the Tian-gung Ci-fu, and finally the Men-kou Tu-di respectively. It should be noted that the Door Gods are often represented by their coloured portraits only and no incense burners are installed for them. But in case two small incense burners are dedicated to them, incense is offered to them just before the offering to the Tian-gung Ci-fu. The sequential order in the process of zhuang-xiang can also be expressed in a schematic representation as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Schematic Representation of the Sequential Order in the Process of Zhuang-xiang



From the schematic representation given in Table 3, we can even arrange the operating principles (sets of binary oppositions) in the order of priority in which they are used in determinating the sequential order of offering in the process of zhuang-xiang. Certainly, the first set of binary opposition in the order of priority is indoor/outdoor, followed by central/peripheral, high/low, and left/right respectively.

It should be remarked here that the opposition between left and right has long been a controversial issue in religious studies. For example, Robert Hertz (1973) postulated an absolute opposition between left and right and tried to attribute the pre-eminence of the right hand to organic asymmetry. To him, the opposition of right and left has the same meaning and application as a series of contrasts presented by the universe. These contrasts are quite different but interchangeable and reducible to common principles. For example, he stated that the terms sacred power, source of life, truth, beauty, virtue, the rising sun, the male sex, and finally, the right side, are all interchangeable, as are their contraries.

By quoting an assemblage of facts from religion and rules of etiquette in classical China, Marcel Granet (1973) criticized Hertz's postulation of an absolute opposition between left and right. He pointed out that, to the Chinese, rather than a fixed predominance or an absolute opposition, there is an alternating pre-eminence of the left and the right. The pre-eminence of the left or the right depends always on events, on the occasional circumstances of time and place.

In the New Territories, we find that in the conception of the natives, it is the left rather than the right that is the honourable side. This is especially prominent in the religious life of the fishing people. In Tai O, the fishing people label the left side as da-bian or the large side and the right side as xi-bian or the small side. For them, da-bian is honourable and sacred. Either inside the house or inside the boat, the shen-lao in which the ancestors and the major deities are honoured is always kept on the da-bian. On the other hand, the toilet, which is thought to be a polluted place, is always kept on the xi-bian.

CHAPTER 3 THE COMMUNAL SETTING FOR WORSHIP

> "The cosmos is an enormous man, but man is also a small-scale universe." (Olivier Herrenschmidt, "Sacrifice: Symbolic or Effective?")

Feng-shui Influence

Feng-shui or geomancy literally means "wind and water". It is based upon the belief that the influences of nature, in the form of Qi or Spiritual Breaths of the Cosmo, bear absolute sway over the fate of man. Every place has its special topographical features which modify the local influence of the Qi. It is essential that the place where a person lives, work, or has his ancestors buried must not interfere with the flowing of the Qi:

> The form of hills, direction of watercourses, forms and heights of buildings, direction of roads and bridges, are all supposed to modify the Ch'i, or spiritual breath of the universe, and Feng Shui is the art of adapting the residences of the living and the dead to conform, as far as possible, with the local currents (Burkhardt 1953:130).

In a pragmatic sense, Feng-shui means a belief system which determines where and how to build dwellings, graves, ancestral halls and temples, or even the whole villages, in order that they are exactly on the best site where they will harmonize with land, wind and water.

In fact, many factors are woven into the reckoning of Feng-shui. These include the Yang and the Yin or the male and the female principles, the Qi or the Spiritual Breaths of the Cosmo, the Si-shen or the Spirits of the Four Directions (the Azure Dragon in the east, the Red Bird in the south, the White Tiger in the west, and the Black Tortoise in the north), the Wu-xing or the Five Elements, the Ba-qua or the Eight Trigrams, and the sexagenary cycle of Hua-jia-zi formed by the matching of the Ten Celestial Stems and the Twelve Terrestrial Branches.

The Feng-shui xian-sheng or geomancer works with a special compass called luo-pan. The luo-pan is marked not only with the compass points but also with the sixty-four gua of the Yi-jing, Celestial Stem-Terrestrial Branch combinations and some other symbols. Working with a luo-pan, the Feng-shui xian-sheng

examines the topographical features of the sites, locates the Azure Dragon, and studies the direction of wind and water. In this way, he can discover the sites where the beneficial influences predominate, or alter, by artificial means, the topographical features of the sites in order that the most favourite results may be achieved.

In general, there is a strong preference for tortuous and winding roads, walls and structures, which must fit into the landscape, rather than dominate it. But straight lines and geometrical layouts are strongly objected to (Needham 1956:361). For example, it is thought that a straight road or a railway may do serious damage by permitting the good influences to drain away. Some natural objects, such as a hill, or some buildings, especially a high building, in front of a site may also work much harm (Latourette 1934:651). Isolated boulders are also conceived as unlucky. The worst site for a dwelling is on featureless ground, a flat plain with no undulations (Burkhardt 1955:138).

An ideal site must be protected on the north from which the Yin comes and is opened to the south which is associated with the Yang. There should be water

flowing in such a way as to partly encircle it but not so directly away from it as to drain away the good influences. Furthermore, there should be some natural features, such as a hill or hummock, in the direction of the Azure Dragon (on the east or the left), which is slightly stronger than that of the White Tiger (on the west or the right) (Latourette 1934:651).

It should be noted that sometimes it is difficult to find a general agreement on the Feng-shui influences in a particular setting:

> Poor people tend to regard the fengshui of their locality as a 'killing breath', while better-off persons in the same settlement may say that it is after all 'not too bad'. Fengshui language, then, is used to express social and economic differentiation (Aijmer 1968:75).

In the New Territories, there are a lot of stories about the effects of Feng-shui on the prosperity of a village or a lineage (for example, Baker 1968:87-88), the manipulation of Feng-shui in fighting against one's enemy (for example, Watson 1975:19-20) and the disputes arising from Feng-shui.

All Chinese temples are Feng-shui oriented. According to Feng-shui principles, the ideal position of a temple is between two spurs of a hill which slope down to a valley or the sea in order that it is sited "either on the pulse of a dragon or in front of a dragon stretching down from hill to sea" (Savidge 1977:22).

In the New Territories, most village houses, especially the more traditional ones, have similar orientational designs. There is a strong preference for a house to be built facing the south. This preference is mainly due to Feng-shui reasons. According to Feng-shui principles, the south is regarded as the source of yang. The siting of a village is subject to the principles of Feng-shui as well. One of the important aspects is that the rear and flanks of a village should be protected by hills. In case no such physical features are found in the surroundings, trees are sometimes deliberately planted to form a thick Feng-shui forest which is thought to have the same function. Furthermore, water should not be seen flowing directly away from the site so as to drain away good influences. Sometimes a pond is built close to the village according to Feng-shui principles

in order that water, which symbolizes wealth here, is saved properly. In a typical Hakka village, there is usually a Feng-shui forest in the rear of the village and there is a semi-circular pond in the front.

The Feng-shui of a New Territories village is sometimes thought to have been damaged by the building of a new road. On these occasions, naam-mo-lo or Taoist priests are often called in to perform a special ritual called Dun-fu in order to restore the Feng-shui of the village. A pot with five rod-like fu or charms made of bamboo or wood is placed in the appropriate location in order to counteract the harmful effects. The five fu represent the commands from the five Tu-gong, or Duke of Earth, of the five directions (East, South, West, North and Centre).

Ancestral Halls

Ancestral halls are mostly found in villages formed by large lineages or clans. All the Five Great Surnames in the New Territories of Hong Kong own large ancestral halls to commemorate their founding ancestors. Being the wealthiest and the most

prosperous among the Five Great Surnames, the Tang clan possess the largest number of splendid ancestral halls.

In the New Territories, ancestral halls are often the largest and the most magnificent buildings found in the villages. An ancestral hall may consist of one, two, or three halls, with internal courtyards open to the sky. Most of the ancestral halls of the Five Great Surnames belong to the three-hall type with two enclosed courtyards. For example, the Tang Ching Lok ancestral hall located at Shui Tau Tsuen in Kam Tin, the Liu Man Shek Tong situated in Sheung Shui Tsuen, the Man Lun Fung ancestral hall located at Fan Tin Tsuen in San Tin and the Hau ancestral hall located at Ho Sheung Heung in Sheung Shui are all three-hall type ancestral halls.

The two-hall type ancestral halls with one enclosed courtyard are more popular. For example, the Pang ancestral hall situated at the outskirts of the north village of Fanling Tsuen is a two-hall type ancestral hall with side rooms and side aisles. Many wealthier smaller lineages or clans in the New Territories also possess two-hall type ancestral halls, with or without side rooms and side aisles. Others may

just have one-hall type ancestral halls or, in most cases, no ancestral hall at all. So, generally speaking, the ancestral hall is a symbol of wealth or even power. And wealth was associated with scholarship. Very often, an ancestral hall would first be established by a successful scholar-official. As generations passed and the clan became larger, further ancestral halls might be built to commemorate the more important descendants of the founding ancestor, which would lead to subdivisions within the clan.

As Baker (1964:36) notes, the soul of the dead progresses from home-worship to clan-worship. The ancestral hall is the most significant communal setting for ancestral worship above the family level. In fact, it is the centre of religious and social life for the zu or the fang:

> When he was alive the founding ancestor ran his family and controlled the purse-strings. Now the hall which represents him still performs these functions, because the leaders of the clan operate from the hall, and call themselves collectively by its name, controlling clan activities and finances. The family revolved around the founder

while he lived, and now the clan revolves around the hall (Baker 1981:117).

The ancestral tablets are usually made of wood. Each tablet bears the name of the deceased, the generation number to which he belong to and the surname(s) of his wife (wives). At the rear there is a receptacle which contains a paper on which are written the names of family ancestors.

Graves

The progress of the corpse is marked by three stages, which may be labeled as first-burial, exhumation, and re-burial. This burial custom is similar to those of the Taiwanese and the Chinese of South China, but differs from the simple inhumation prevalent in North and Central China (Ling 1955).

Usually some five or ten years after the burial, the dead body is exhumed and the bones cleaned and re-buried. The whole process would be done by a specialist. First, the soil covering the coffin is removed and the lid of the coffin is opened. The specialist would then pick up what can be found of the

bones. This process is called Zhi-gu or Picking the Bones. Every piece of flesh and ligament, if it remains unrotted, and all the hair would be cleared from the bones. Then the bones would be washed carefully with water and the process is called xi-gu or Washing the Bones.

After washing, all the bones found would be displayed piece by piece on the ground near the grave to be dried by sunshine and wind. When the bones are thoroughly dried, they would be stored in a large earthenware urn. Inside the urn, the bones would be carefully put together to reform a skeleton in a bending position with the knees cap touching the skull.

Re-burial must wait until not only an auspicious time is chosen, but also an auspicious site is found for the grave. The siting of this final grave is chosen by a geomancer according to the principles of Feng-shui. It is believed that if the grave is in a good Feng-shui site and that observances of ancestor worship are properly followed, the soul of the dead is able to bring blessings to his living descendants. According to Feng-shui principles, an ideal site for a final grave is one which is:

high up and is on the lower part of an ascending ridge, flanked on either side by another ridge running almost parallel but turning slightly in towards the centre ridge. By these means the grave should be a large open space preferably containing water. The ridge on the right is known as the White Tiger and should be slightly shorter than that on the left - the Green Dragon. When sitting in the grave near where the urn is buried, one should be able to feel no wind, so that none of the good influences can be blown away (Baker 1964:37-38).

Eberhard (1952:63) remarked that one finds no cemeteries in China. Each family buries its dead in its own graveyard. In the New Territories, it is common to find several graves scattered on the slopes of a hill. In some traditional villages, such as some of the villages in Lam Tsuen, we can even find some graves in the midst of the fields.

Shrines Dedicated to Territorial Deities

Earth Gods abound in traditional New Territories

villages. It should be noted that there is not just one Earth God but rather a whole range of differentiated earth tutelaries, with each of them performing a specialized function. Each of these earth tutelaries is named according to the specialized function he is performing or the specific locality he is supposed to be the earth tutelary of. In his research on the religious customs of the Chinese peasant, Clarence Day also noted that the Chekiang villagers had many differentiated earth tutelaries which might represent special functions or aspects of the same Tu-di. And interesting enough, the ma-jia (paper god) printer in Chekiang wisely provided in the ma-jia entitled "Tsung T'u" or the "United Earth Gods" for the convenience of the peasant. By using this collective term, all earth tutelaries might be appeased at the same time (Day 1940:67).

According to terminological distinctions made by the villagers in the New Territories, there are three major categories of earth tutelaries, namely, Tu-di, Bo-gong, Da-wang.

Tu-di is the best known and the most common type of earth tutelary. Since Tu-di is also responsible for

the provision of blessing and the maintenance of virtue, he is also known as Fu-de Zheng-shen or the True God of Blessing and Virtue. Sometimes more intimate and respectful terms are used, such as Fu-de Lao-ye or Fu-de Ye-ye which means Maternal Grandfather the God of Blessing and Virtue. Tu-di is the earth tutelary of a specific locality, either indoor or outdoor. The most popular derivatives of Tu-di are Di-zhu or the Earth God of the House, Men-kou Tu-di or the Earth God of the Doorway, and Hou-tu or the Earth God of the Grave. Usually, Tu-di is represented by a wooden tablet, a paper tablet, or a stone. Sometimes he is represented as a kind old man in the form of a clay figure.

Bo-gong is a kind of differentiated earth tutelary very similar to Tu-di. Literally, Bo-gong means Paternal Grandfather. With few exceptions (for example, Hayes 1962:91; Baker 1979a:2; Berkowitz et. al. 1969:75-78; Faure 1986), the emic term Bo-gong is seldom found in writings on folk religion in Hong Kong. The location where the Bo-gong usually reside include trees, stones, wells and bridges. Their shrines, which are very simple, are commonly found around the foot of a tree, beside a path or a bridge. Very often, Bo-

gong is named according to the specific locality where he is regarded as the earth tutelary. Some common ones are Shui-jing Bo-gong or Paternal Grandfather of the Well, He-tang Bo-gong or Paternal Grandfather of the Rice Field, Qiao-tou Bo-gong or Paternal Grandfather of the Bridge, and Wei-men Bo-gong or Paternal Grandfather of the Doorway of the Walled Village.

Another common type of earth tutelary found in more traditional villages is those dedicated to Da-wang or Great King. Sometimes another term, Da-wang-ye or Maternal Grandfather the Great King, is used to increase the sense of intimacy and respect. Furthermore, it should be noted that Da-wang is also variously known as She-ji, She-ji Da-wang, or She-tan in the New Territories. A typical shrine for Da-wang is an armchair-shaped structure which is made of bricks or stones.

The earth tutelaries Da-wang, Tu-di and Bo-gong are all locality specific because each of them is thought to be in charge of a specific locality only. Here I would like to use the term "territorial deities", which highlights the fact that these deities are locality-specific, in referring to them.

Symbolically, these territorial deities serve to mark the boundary between villages or the boundaries between different parts of a village. Furthermore, in the conception of the villagers, it seems that the Da-wang takes care of the whole village or a part of in a general sense, whereas the Tu-di and the Bo-gong only look after a small specific location, such as a field, a well, or a bridge, within the village. The Da-wang is regarded more or less as a territorial symbol of the village. In addition, when a man migrates from one village to another, he changes his Tu-di:

> The T'u Ti, in fact, appears to be a local divinity who holds his position irrespective of the movements of families and changes of surnames (Johnston 1910:373).

In a case study of forced migration in the New Territories from a farming village to a market town, it was found that the earth tutelaries were sent back to Heaven (Berkowitz 1975:6) or, if an earth tutelary was carried by the villagers to the resettled location, it is interesting to find that they change the plaque after removal:

> However, after removal they changed the plaque ...

by erasing the old inscriptions and scrawling a plea for greater rents, rather than general fertility. They had transmuted this God from a God specific to the home and fields to a God specific to their contemporary problems of the dependence on the collection of rent (Berkowitz et. al. 1975:8).

In fact, the Tu-di, Bo-gong and Da-wang are all important deities in the village world. Important things in village life, such as births and deaths, are reported to these deities at their shrines. And being territorial deities, they serve as symbolic markers of boundaries between different specific localities. For example, they are often used as the symbolic markers of the boundaries between villages.

Village Temples and Shen-ting

Village temples are usually built by community-wide public subscriptions. The names of the subscribers and the amount of donations is inscribed on a stone tablet which would be mounted on the wall inside the temple. When a village temple is renovated,

the names of the subscribers and the amount of their contributions would also be inscribed on a stone tablet. The ceremonial atmosphere is often heightened by the performance of Chinese operas (for example, Watson 1975:141-143).

According to terminological distinction, the Chinese temples in Hong Kong roughly fall into two categories, the miao (miu) and the gong (gung) or palace. Ideally, there is, in fact, architectural distinction between them:

> The typical gung is a large open court with a covered altar in the centre. Along the 'north' wall there will be a further three altars. The miu, on the other hand, is almost an inverse image of this arrangement. Instead of being open it is closed except for a hole in the roof in the centre. The main altar is in the centre of the back wall (Chamberlain 1983:14).

Based on these two models, generally speaking a small room with only one altar may be called a gong while a grand hall may be called a miao. However, it should be noted that the distinction is not absolute.

In a wei or walled village, a shen-ting or spiritual hall is always located at the end of the main entrance leading to the wei. And on the left side of the wei-men or the doorway of the wei, a small shrine is dedicated to the Wei-men Bo-gong. The Wei-men Bo-gong is variously known as Wei-men-gong or Men-guan. He is a kind of territorial deity who guards the doorway of the wei. In some cases, another small shrine dedicated to the Tu-di is found on the right side of the wei-men. Inside the shen-ting, a large wooden tablet is placed on the main altar facing directly to the wei-men. On the tablet, the titles and the names of the principal deities honoured by the villagers are written or inscribed. Sometimes the founders of the wei or those who died in fighting against hostile enemies from neighboring villages are also honoured on the tablet. And at the base of the main altar, there is a shrine dedicated to the Hu-wei Bo-gong or the Earth God Who Protects the Walled Village.

Village Alliance Temples

In the New Territories of Hong Kong, one type of

temple has been of great importance in the religious life and social milieu of the village world. Although there is no special emic term for this kind of temple, certainly the villagers concerned are conscious of their special significance and can tell them apart from other types of temple without any difficulty. John Brim coined the term "village alliance temples" to label this kind of temple. According to his definition:

> Village alliance temples serve and are owned and controlled by organizations of allied villages (Brim 1974:93).

Before we can discuss village alliance temples in more detail, we must have a better understanding of village alliances. In the New Territories, village alliances have long been very common and they are referred to in temple inscriptions dating from the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Brim 1974:94). In the past, in fact most of the New Territories villages were organized into distinctive village alliances, commonly referred to as xiang (heung) or yue (yeuk).

It seems plausible that the words xiang and yue come directly from the term xiang-yue which has a long

history in Chinese local administration. By the Qing dynasty, xiang-yue was sometimes taken to be synonymous with the 'bao-jia' and 'li-jia' institutions (Freedman 1976:207). According to the bao-jia institution, ten hu or households were grouped in a pai, ten pai in a jia, and ten jia in a bao. The bao was headed by a bao-zhang, or di-bao, who was elected by the local people. In the li-jia institution, ten hu were grouped together to form a jia, and ten jia together with an extra ten hu to form a li. But by the eighteenth century, the li-jia institution seems to have been merged into the bao-jia institution and soon the joint institution declined in effectiveness.

The bao-jia institution was adopted in the early years of the Qing dynasty. It served as a means of registration of individuals and households, and reporting to the magistrate of crimes and criminals. Apparently, the latter function was more important (Freedman 1966:80).

According to the 1819 edition of the Hsin-an Gazetteer, the bao-jia institution was in force in the Hsin-an county (Ng 1983:65-66, 114) and it was proposed that even the Tanka or boat people should be entered on

the bao-jia registers like the land people (ibid. 122-123). At that time, villages and lineage in the county organized their own educational facilities, their own regiments called tuan-lian for local defence (Groves 1969; Freedman 1976:207), and their own religious activities.

After the lease of the New Territories to Britain in 1899, the colonial administrators regarded the di-bao as a superior sort of local constable (Freedman 1966:81). The major village alliances were incorporated in the administrative structure by the colonial government and the leaders of the village alliances were given semiofficial status (Lockhart 1900:251).

Each of the village alliances has its own name and this name is often used to label the territory or the community concerned as well. Sometimes the village alliance is reflected by the name of a territory or community because the word "xiang" or "yue" is included in the name. For example, Pat Heung, a xiang situated in the central part of the New Territories, is both the name of the village alliance and the territory concerned.

The village alliances of the New Territories can

be roughly divided into two types. In the first type, all the villages that compose the village alliance have been populated almost exclusively by the descendants of the same zu. For example, the village alliance of Lung Yeuk Tau in Fanling has long been composed of five wei or walled villages and six cun or villages, all of which have been dominated by the Tang zu. In some other cases, several satellite villages in the territory which are populated by people of different surnames are also regarded as members of the village alliance.

The second type of village alliance is not dominated by a single zu and almost all the villages that compose the village alliance are populated by people of different surnames. Even more, in some cases the villages are inhabited by different dialect groups. For example, the village alliance of Pat Heung was originally composed of eight villages. In fact, the alliance is already reflected in the name Pat Heung which means "Alliance of Eight Villages". But now there are twenty-five villages in the community and the alliance is not dominated by a single zu. Among the twenty-five villages, eighteen are inhabited by Punti people only, six are inhabited by Hakka people only,

and one is mixed in which Punti people and Hakka people live together in a single village. Another example is in the district of Pui O on Lantau Island where nine separate villages inhabited by both Hakka and Cantonese have been linked to form a yue since the Qing dynasty (Hayes 1964:22).

Lockhart (1900:251) noted that the villages which compose a village alliance are often located in an area having a common drainage system. In fact, to a certain extent, a village alliance often forms an self-contained unit in many aspects. For example, most village alliances have their own village alliance temple. In some cases, they also have their own markets (for example, Groves 1964). Furthermore, when it rises to the occasion, the member villages of a village alliance could often form a strong paramilitary force to fight against outsiders, which were, in most cases, the neighboring village alliances. Very often, the disputes arose from struggles of economic advantage, such as the control of business transactions in a market, the demarcation of territorial boundaries, water rights and ritual benefits. In the past, such kinds of antagonisms between different village alliances were very prevalent in the village world of

the New Territories (for examples, Baker 1966:39-41, 1979b:146-152, 1988:6; Potter 1969:13-14; Freedman 1976:205-206).

Just from their physical appearance, we cannot distinguish between a village temple and a village alliance temple. To the observer, it is only when periodic festivities are centered on the temple that we can tell them apart. On these occasions, such as a Da-jiao, the organization of the village alliance is clearly reflected by the participation of its member villages. The cost of the celebration is always shared between villagers of the member villages. In return, all these people receive the protection and blessing from the principal deity of the village alliance temple. Therefore, the village alliance temple not only symbolizes a contract that binds the member villages together to form a unity of a higher order, it also symbolizes a contract between the villagers of the village alliance and the principal deity of the temple.

The principal deity varies in different village alliance temples. For example, whereas Tian-hou is the principal deity of both the village alliance temple in Lam Tsuen and of that in Shap Pat Heung, Guan-yin is

the principal deity of the village alliance temple in Pat Heung. However, no matter which deity is honoured as the principal deity, a village alliance temple always serves as a sacred symbol of the village alliance as a whole.

William Skinner (1978) shows us that traditional Chinese society was made up of a hierarchy of cellular structures which were shaped in reality by factors such as local topography, distance, transport facility, and population. At the bottom of the hierarchy is the standard marketing community which was also the culture-bearing unit in traditional Chinese rural society (Skinner 1964). However, it seems that Skinner's economic hierarchy does not apply well to the case of the New Territories. Rather, we find that most of the villages in the New Territories have organized themselves into village alliances. And within the territory of each village alliance, a village alliance temple, rather than a standard market, serves as the center as well as the sacred symbol of the community.

Symbolic Classification of Space in the Communal Setting

The shrines dedicated to local deities such as Da-wang, Bo-gong and Tu-di are found mainly on the outskirts of the village. Very often, they are located beside the passes leading to the village. In this sense, they guard the entrances to the village and roughly mark the boundary of the village as well.

In the New Territories, only some of the villages have their own village temples. Similarly, we do not find ancestral halls in all the villages, but in most of them. And since the exact location and orientation of a temple or an ancestral hall should be decided according to Feng-shui principles, no simple generalization can be made concerning their exact locations in a village. However, in most cases they are located within the main settlement area of the village, or at least, they are easily accessible to the villagers by just a few minutes' walk.

If we compare the setting of a village temple and an ancestral hall with that of a traditional village house, we can find that there are quite a lot of striking similarities in the spatial orientation of

shrines.

The shrine for the principal deity (or deities) in a village temple or the ancestral tablets in an ancestral hall must be honoured at the central hall facing directly to the main entrance. In a village house, the shrine for the ancestors and that for the major deities are installed in the shen-lou which is located in the living room and is placed directly facing the main entrance to the house. Whereas deities are worshipped in the village temple and ancestors are worshipped in the ancestral hall, in the village house the two categories of immortals are worshipped simultaneously inside the shen-lou. Although the shen-lou combines the major functions of the village temple and the ancestral hall in one, they in fact aim at different niches. While the shen-lou exclusively belongs the the family, the ancestral hall is the centre of ancestral worship for the fang or jia-zu and the village temple is open to all the villagers.

In a village house, a shrine dedicated to Di-zhu or the Foundation Spirit is always found inside the lowest partition of the shen-lou. In every village temple and ancestral hall, we can also find the

counterpart of the shrine at the base of the main altar. But the deity honoured is sometimes known as Hu-miao Tu-di or the Earth God Who Protects the Temple in the case of village temples, and Hu-ci Tu-di or the Earth God Who Protects the Ancestral Hall in the case of ancestral hall. Both the Hu-xiang Tu-di and the Hu-ci Tu-di are in fact differentiated Earth Gods with similar functions to the Di-zhu.

In some village temples, such as the Da-wang temple in Kam Tsin and the Hou-wang temple at Tung Tau Tsuen in Ha Tsuen, we can also find a kitchen in one of the side rooms. During large-scale festivities, food for the communal feast is prepared in the kitchen of the village temple. Inside the kitchen, a shrine dedicated to the Stove God is also found near the stove. However, it seems that kitchens are seldom found in ancestral halls.

Finally, as in the case of village houses, the Door Gods are also honoured at the main entrance to every village temple or ancestral hall. In a village temple, besides the two small incense burners on the sides of the doorway, portraits of the Door Gods are also sometimes found on the doors. But in the case of

ancestral halls, most often we can only find the two small incense burners on the sides of the doorway.

If we compare the layout of a wei and that of a village house, again we find many striking similarities. The shen-ting of a wei is the place where the principal deities are worshipped and the shen-lou of a village house is the place where both the ancestors and the major deities are honoured. In the wei we have the Wei-men Bo-gong or the Men-guan on the left side of the doorway, and in the village house we have the Tian-guan Ci-fu on the left side of the doorway. Finally, on the right side of the wei-men there is a shrine dedicated to Tu-di, and on the right side of the village house there is a shrine for the Men-kou Tu-di. Both of them serve to guard the main entrance leading to the main altar.

Although the village house, the village temple, the ancestral hall, and the shen-ting (including the wei-men) serve various functions at different levels, the spatial orientation of the shrines is basically the same (see Table 4).

Table 4 Spatial Orientation of Shrines in Village House, Village Temple, Ancestral Hall and Shen-ting (including the Wei-men)

	Village House	Village Temple	Ancestral Hall	Shen-ting & Wei-men
1)	Ancestors	-	Ancestors	-
2)	Major Deities	Principal Deities	-	Principal Deities
3)	Di-zhu	Hu-miao Tu-di	Hu-ci Tu-di	Hu-wei Tu-di
4)	Stove God	Stove God	-	-
5)	Door Gods	Door Gods	Door Gods	Door Gods
6)	Tian-guan Ci-fu	Men-guan	-	Wei-Men Bo-gong
7)	Men-kou Tu-di	Tu-di	-	Tu-di

In his study of Southeastern China, Maurice Freedman (1958, 1966) distinguished between the lineage as a property (in particular, corporately owned land) holding corporate group and the dispersed divisions of society that claimed a common origin, for which he used the term "clan". He singled out the corporate nature and the maintenance of "rites of solidarity" as the essential characteristics of the lineage. He coined

the term "localized lineage" and argued that Southeastern China has specialized in large-scale unilineal organizations.

Much influenced by Freedman, many scholars seem to take it for granted without any query that clan villages are common in Southeastern China and that lineages and villages tend to coincide. However, in New Territories villages, it is common to find that people with different surnames, and even more, people of different dialect groups, live together in a single village. In the village, there are no "large-scale lineage organizations". There may be a few small ancestral halls owned by some of the surname groups but the major centripetal force which maintains the village as a whole does not comes from blood ties.

Rather, we find that communal activities of the village are focused on the worship of local deities, and festivities are centered on village temples or shen-ting, if any. Territorial deities, such as Da-wang, Tu-di or Bo-gong, act as symbolic markers of boundaries between villages. And at a higher order, as I have mentioned before, villages often group together into village alliances. Within the territory of each

village alliance, most often there is a village alliance temple which serves as a sacred symbol of the alliance as a whole. Certainly, as David Faure (1986:10) has also noted, Freedman missed the significance of the religion practised in the villages which is focused on Earth Gods and temple deities.

CHAPTER 4 ANNUAL RITES

> "the scientist creating events (changing the world) by means of structures and the 'bricoleur' creating structures by means of events." (Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind)

The Chinese Traditional Calendar

In contemporary China, two different calendrical systems are used simultaneously. The Gregorian or Western calendar is used for official purposes. However, the traditional lunar calendar, or more accurately a lunar-solar calendar, is still widely followed especially in the rural areas.

According to legends, the appearance of the Chinese lunar-solar calendar dates back to the Xia dynasty (21st-16th century B.C.) (Latsch 1984:17). It is commonly known as the Agricultural Calendar, the Old Calendar, or the Xia Calendar.

The interval between two successive new moons is approximately 29.5 days. Therefore it takes only 354 days for the moon to revolute twelve times around the earth. However, one revolution of the earth around the sun requires 365.25 days. As a consequence, twelve

lunar months are shorter than one solar year and the solar year can thus have either twelve or thirteen full moons. The listing of months and days in the Chinese traditional calendar follows a system of dual calculations based upon the movements of both the sun and the moon.

To the Chinese, the moon has always been considered very important and it has been felt that the listing of months and days in the calendar should follow the lunar cycle. In the Chinese lunar calendar, the day of the new moon is always the first day of the month and accordingly, the full moon always falls on the fourteenth or fifteenth day of the month. This requires that each month has either twenty-nine or thirty days. As a result, the lunar year has only 354 days and this makes one lunar year eleven days shorter than one solar year. If no modification is made, the lunar New Year's day would pass through all the four natural seasons in successive years. Such a calendar may be acceptable to anyone except the farmer, who relies so much upon the calendar to determine when he should plough, plant, irrigate and harvest.

The modification to be made in the Chinese lunar

calendar is that in every period of nineteen years, there will be seven intercalary months. In other words, twelve years within this period will have twelve months each and seven years will have thirteen months. Thus the Chinese lunar year roughly coincides with the solar year at the end of each nineteen-year period. As a result, the Chinese traditional calendar differs from a purely lunar one.

In ancient China, there was a solar calendar too. It was, and still is, widely used by the farmers. The calculation of the solar year is determined by setting the times of the beginning of the Spring Equinox (usually on March 21), the Summer Solstice (usually on June 22), the Autumn Equinox (usually on September 23) and the Winter Solstice (usually on December 22). To these four fixed points in the year are added twenty points, each of which are named after an important agrarian or natural event, such as "Grain in Beard" or " Small Heat". These twenty-four points in the solar year are set in succession at approximately fifteen-day intervals and thus together form the twenty-four periods or "joints" of the Chinese solar calendar. Each of the four seasons is then subdivided into three

periods.

Thus the Chinese traditional calendar is in fact a lunar-solar calendar or what Wolfram Eberhard (1952:29) calls a "lunisolar" calendar. The features of this lunar-solar calendar may be summarized as follows:

> the months and days of the calendar are listed according to the lunar cycle; the twenty-four solar divisions are inserted at the appropriate intervals; finally, an adjustment of intercalary months is made to the years, which themselves are made up of lunar months, to bring them into harmony with the cycle of the sun (Berkowitz et. al. 1969:45).

The traditional double-calendar system has been widely used by the Chinese for more than two thousand yeas, until the Western or the Gregorian calendar was adopted as the official calendar after the decline of the imperial dynasties. However, in contemporary China and in Hong Kong, the Chinese traditional calendar is still used alongside with the Western or Gregorian calendar. A modern Chinese almanac includes both of these calendars with the dates of the traditional Chinese festivals marked on each of them.

The annual cycle of solar divisions is closely linked to the rhythm of nature and the sun regulates the seasons, therefore the solar calendar is extremely significant to the farmers, providing useful information concerning the proper time for different agricultural activities. And in the days of the imperial dynasties, one of the Emperor's major duties was to lead the major imperial rites of the solar year. However, the large majority of traditional Chinese festivals are in fact dated by the Chinese traditional lunar calendar. Qing-ming-jie and the Winter Solstice are two exceptions. These two festivals are dated by the solar calendar and their observances are still regularly followed in contemporary Hong Kong.

In the Chinese calendar, two systems are used to determine the character of every year. In the first system, each year is named after an animal. There are twelve animals represented in recurring chronological sequence in the scale. The names of the years are Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.

In the second system, each year is enumerated by a

pair of Chinese characters. The first character in each pair comes from the Shi Tian-gan or the ten Celestial Stems and the second from the Shi-er Di-zhi or the Twelve Terrestrial branches. The Celestial Stems are ten in number, and the Terrestrial Branches twelve, and the common multiple of ten and twelve is sixty, so when the ten Celestial Stems are matched with the Terrestrial Branches, a complete cycle of sixty is formed. This cycle of sixty is called a jia-zi or hua-jia-zi. When a jia-zi is completed in the computation of years, it starts from the very beginning again. According to Yue-ling Zhang-ju which forms part of the Li-ji or the Record of Rites (William 1931:104-105), jia-zi was invented in 2637 B.C. (Dore 1916:262) by Da-nao, minister to the legendary sovereign Huang-di or the Yellow Emperor, who arranged the cyclic series to give names to years for computation.

The cycle of sixty is also associated with Tai-sui or the Minister of Time. As the Minister of Time, Tai-sui is believed to control the dates and times of births and deaths. In Cantonese, and Shanghainese as well (Stevens 1972:172), Tai-sui is usually found to be in groups of sixty images, displayed in rows in temples. Each one of the sixty images of Tai-sui is

dedicated to one specific year in the cycle of jia-zi.

Shi-jie: Traditional Annual Festivals

The term "shi-jie", instead of the word "festivals", is deliberately used here in order to make a clearer distinction between several kinds of Chinese festivities which are commonly grouped together without differentiation under the vague English translation "Chinese festivals".

When you ask a Hong Kong Chinese when he would visit the local temples or make offerings at the domestic shrines, the answer would most probably be "guo-shi guo-jie" or "whenever there is a shi-jie". Therefore the term "shi-jie" is indeed an emic term which is commonly used by the folk. By the term "shi-jie", the native speakers in fact refer to those traditional annual festivals which are celebrated by the majority of the Han Chinese.

The origins of some of these traditional annual festivals can be traced back as far as the Zhou dynasty (1066-256 B.C.) or even the Shang dynasty (1600-1066

B.C.) (Latsch 1984:6). Others appeared much later. Although there may be local variations in the details of their celebration, these traditional annual festivals are essentially celebrated by all walks of life in Chinese society and the basic meanings attached to them remain relatively unchanged. In fact, the shi-jie play a significant role in the ordering of the annual life of the Chinese people and form a relatively coherent part of traditional Chinese culture.

Xie-zao or Thanking the Stove God is celebrated on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar moon. It is believed that on this day the Stove God ascends to Heaven to make a report on the family's conduct to the Jade Emperor. On this day, Chinese families prepare a delicious meal of sticky, sweet things, such as glutinous rice and honey or sugar. It is thought that with these sticky, sweet things smeared over his mouth, the Stove God would tell only good and sweet things about the household or report as little as possible. Wine is also offered, and paper money burned, to send the Stove God back to Heaven.

In the old days, Xie-zao was held on different dates for three distinguished classes. As an old

saying goes, "gung-san min-si dan-jia-wu". It means that Xie-zao would be held on the twenty-third day of the twelve lunar moon for the guan or the officials, on the twenty-fourth day for the min, and on the twenty-fifth day for the dan-jia (tanka) or the boat people.

Before the Nong-li Xin-nian or the Lunar New Year, the house must be thoroughly cleaned and appropriate lucky sayings are pasted on the sides and the tops of main doorways. These sayings are written in rhyming couplets on pieces of red paper. In addition, pictures of Door Gods are pasted on the front door.

New Year's Eve is reserved for a family feast. It is a time for reunion. On that night, each family member should bathe with green leaf water which is prepared by boiling some kinds of green leaves, such as pomelo leaves, in water. This washing symbolizes washing away of all the bad, the unlucky, and the evil things. Most people remain awake on the last night of the old year. It is called Shou-sui or guarding the year.

On the New Year day, people have to abstain from meat, eating such foods as dried bamboo shoots,

mushrooms and lettuce. The most common greeting in the Chinese New Year is gong-xi fa-cai which means "wishing you to prosper". During the New Year's days, respect for elders is greatly emphasized. It is a custom for married couples to give li-shi, a red envelope containing lucky money, to children.

The Second Day of the New Year, known as kai-nian, is a day for more visiting. Abstention from meat ends on this day. The Third Day of the New Year is known as chi-kou. It is believed that people may be quarrelsome or unpleasant on this day. Therefore they should stay at home instead of visiting each other. But nowadays the taboo is usually neglected. It is a common practice that most shops reopen on the Fifth Day. The Seventh Day is regarded as ren-ri or "everybody's birthday".

The New Year is also an important period for people to visit Chinese temples. In front of the altars, the devotees make their offerings and use divining blocks and fortune sticks to ask about their fortune in the new year.

Yuan-xiao-jie or the Lantern Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the first lunar

moon. It marks the end of the Lunar New Year. In North China, Yuan-xiao-jie was really an exciting public occasion. Lanterns were displayed in all shops and fire-crackers were set off. There were also dragon-lantern processions, masked parades and dragon dances (Eberhard 1952:54-59; Tun 1900:6-9; Law and Ward 1982:28). But we find no occasion of the same nature in contemporary Hong Kong, though in recent years there is an attempt to have lanterns displayed in the city parks. In New Territories villages, lanterns are hung in the ancestral halls and village temples. But the practice, which is called Dian-deng or Lighting the Lanterns, is in fact a kind of *rite de passage* and is different in nature from those found in North China.

Sacrifices at the graves of ancestors are made twice a year, once in the spring during the Qing-ming-jie and once in the autumn at the Chong-yang-jie. In Hong Kong, many people go to visit the graves in the New Territories or even in Mainland China on these occasions.

Qing-ming-jie or the Clear Brightness Festival is a festival which is directly and entirely dated by the solar calendar. It marks the beginning of the fifth of

the twenty-four jie-qi or solar divisions and it generally falls early in April of the Western calendar.

Duan-wu-jie (Duan-yang-jie in Mandarin) is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar moon. Another common name for the festival is Wu-yue-jie or the Fifth Month Festival. It is also known, especially among westerners, as the Dragon Boat Festival. The exact origin of Duan-wu-jie is unknown, but legend tells us that this festival commemorates the death of the wise and loyal poet, Qu-yuan , who drowned himself in a river to express his sorrow in the southern state of Chu during the Warring States (403-221 B.C.).

Legend says that Qu-yuan drowned himself on the fifth day of the fifth lunar moon. When people heard about it, they set out in boats to the spot to save him. The custom of the annual dragon boat races recalls in symbolic form the desperate attempt made by the fishermen to save the poet. In mourning for Qu-yuan, the people also threw rice into the river as a sacrifice to his soul. Qu-yuan's spirit is said to have appeared later to the people complaining that the rice offered to him was all eaten by fish and turtles. He asked the people to wrap the rice in small pieces of

silk tied with silk threads of five different colours. Accordingly, the custom of making zong or rice cakes developed. Today the zong are wrapped in large pieces of bamboo leaves tied with tough strands of grass. And instead of throwing them into the water, people take the zong as a kind of delicious food especially made for the celebration of the festival. People also distribute the zong among relatives or take them as gifts for friends.

Qi-zi-jie or the Seventh Sister Festival is associated with the legend of the Cowherd and the Weaving Girl which goes back more than two thousand years. In its original form the legend says that the seventh daughter of the Heavenly Emperor was a beautiful girl. She was industrious and spent all her time weaving by the Heavenly River. Feeling sorry for her lonely life, the Heavenly Emperor married her to a Heavenly Cowherd who lived on the other side of the river. But after the wedding, the couple fell so deeply in love with each other that they both completely forgot their duties. The Emperor was so angry that he separated the couple, allowing them to meet each other once a year, on the night of the seventh day of the seventh lunar moon. On that day,

all the magpies of the earth fly to heaven and build a bridge with their wings over the wide Heavenly River so that the loving couple can get together. But the couple must be separated again the next day. However, there are other versions of the story (Eberhard 1952:105-106; Berkowitz et. al. 1969:55; Law and Ward 1982:67).

The main offering to the Seven Sisters is a circular paper tray called qi-zi-pan or seven sisters tray. Other paper articles associated with the Seven Sisters and the Cowherd, such as paper dresses, combs, hats are also included. These paper articles are burned on the evening of the seventh day.

The Seventh Sister Festival is basically a festival for women. The Weaving Girl is regarded as the patron of embroiderers and weavers. Some ladies who work in the textile industry organize themselves into Seven Sister Clubs. Club funds collected from membership fees are invested and earn interest. The funds are used to celebrate the annual festival. When one of the members gets married, she has to present a gift of roast pork, cakes and fruits to her club members. If a married member begets a child, she has

to present hong-ji-dan or red dyed eggs to other members of the club.

Zhong-qiu-jie or the Mid-Autumn Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar moon. A special kind of sweet cake known as yue-bing or moon cakes is prepared in the shape of the moon and filled with ground lotus seeds and salted duck eggs. In Hong Kong, any open space in the urban areas which is easily accessible is crowded on this night with people who try to get a glimpse of the legendary, auspicious full moon.

Chong-yang-jie is also known as the Chong-jiu Festival or the Double Ninth Festival because it is observed on the ninth day of the ninth lunar moon. Legend says that during the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) a man named Huan Jing took the advice of his teacher as well as a soothsayer, Fei Chang-fang, to avoid a disaster by taking his family to a high mountain for one day. He was also told to wear a bag containing bits of dogwood and to drink chrysanthemum wine to ward off evil things (Modder 1983:58). When Huan Jing returned to his village, he found that a disaster had occurred.

Chong-yang-jie is celebrated today as the autumn counterpart of the spring Qing-ming-jie. On both occasions, large numbers of people go to visit the graves of their ancestors. Before offerings are made and worshipping begins, they have to sweep, clean and redecorate the graves.

Dong-zhi or the Winter Solstice, is the chief celebration of the eleventh lunar moon. It is the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere. As the turning point of the year, it is of great importance to the Chinese who depend heavily on agricultural produce. In Imperial China, the Emperor led the annual sacrifices on this day at the Temple of Heaven in Peking (Law and Ward 1982:83).

The festival is also a date for remembrances of the dead. The head of the family leads the ancestral worship at the domestic shrine and all members of the family make every effort to stay at home to have a big annual family dinner before the ancestral shrine. "Dong-da-guo-nian" is an old Chinese saying which means that Dong-zhi is more important than the Lunar New Year. On this day, ceremonial offerings are observed in temples and ancestral halls in New Territories

villages, often followed by a distribution of pork. People also go to the shrines of Da-wang, Tu-di and Bo-gong which belong to their own villages to make offerings.

Shen-dan: Birthdays of Gods

Shen-dan is an emic term which means birthdays of gods. In Hong Kong, people celebrate a number of shen-dan. In the past, a major program in these celebrations was a puppet show, which served to entertain both the deities and the people concerned. But after the Second World War, Chinese operas have become more and more welcome on these occasions and have, in fact, replaced the puppet shows in almost all cases. The organization of these opera performances is usually centered on a village or a village alliance. So the operas perform social functions as well as religious functions.

Needless to say, shen-dan is an important occasion for people to visit their favourite gods. Devotees are laden with their offerings which are commonly in the form of roast pigs, steamed chickens, traditional

dumplings, joss sticks and paper offerings. Some believers form a special type of religious association, known as dan-hui or hua-pao-hui, to celebrate the birthday of a particular deity collectively (for examples, Watson 1975:216, Osgood 1975:116). The members of a dan-hui or hua-pao-hui have to pay a certain amount of money a month to the person in charge of it. Then on the birthday of the deity to whom the association is devoted, each member gets his own share from the association a certain amount of offerings, such as roast pig, steamed chicken, cakes, and fruits, for the celebration of the birthday of the deity.

Che-gong-dan is celebrated on the third day of the first lunar moon. The most spectacular local Che-gong temple is located in Shatin in the Eastern New Territories. On this day, the temple and its surrounding areas are crowded with thousands of devotees. There is a wheel on the altar. It is believed that anyone who give it a turn will have a good 'turn' in his fortune.

Celebration of Tu-di-dan or the Birthday of Earth Gods is held on the second day of the second lunar moon. On this day, villagers in the New Territories

visit the shrines of Tu-di, Bo-gong and Da-yang of their own village. The paper tablets and the red papers of the shrines are renewed. Bowls of cooked rice, roasted pork, steamed chicken, tea, wine, red candles and incense are offered. However, it should be noted that on the second and the sixteenth days of every lunar moon, a brief version of this ritual is also practised. These are called Zuo-ya which means literally Doing the Welcome. Zuo-ya are celebrated at the communal shrines as well as the domestic ones, such as those dedicated to the Di-zhu, and the Men-kou Tu-di. In the annual cycle, Tou-ya or the First Zuo-ya is celebrated on the second day of the first lunar moon, which is also the proper day of Tu-di-dan, whereas Wei-ya or the Last Zuo-ya is on the sixteenth day of the twelve lunar moon.

Celebration of Hong-sheng-dan is held on the thirteen day of the second lunar moon. But in Sha Lo Wan, the festival is held on the twenty-third day of the seventh lunar moon. Hong-sheng is a benevolent patron of seafarers. Some accounts hold that Hong-sheng is the reincarnation of the legendary Dragon King who rules the Southern Seas. It is believed that he can control demons and monsters of the sea who cause

typhoons, storms and other disasters. Another claims that he was a good official in Guangdong Province in the T'ang dynasty (618-906 A.D.) who knew how to foretell the weather (Modder 1983:24). Hong-sheng temples are mainly located in traditional fishing villages, such as Kau Sai, Ap Lei Chau, Tai O, Po Toi O and Tung Lung Island.

Guan-yin or the Goddess of Mercy has three birthdays every year, which are celebrated on the nineteenth days of the second, the sixth, and the ninth lunar moons respectively. The first of these is the most widely celebrated one. On these birthdays of Guan-yin, many Chinese women go to her temples and ask her to give them children. But men are no less devoted to Guan-yin than women are. They ask her to shed her pity and mercy upon them and to save them from misery, suffering and evil. The name Guan-yin means one who always observes or pays attention to sounds, that is, one who heeds the world's prayer. Those who seek relief from pains and sufferings turn to her. She is thought to be able to deliver people from misery by granting them a compassionate glance.

The celebration of Bei-di-dan is held on the third

day of the third lunar month. Bei-di, who is also known as Xuan-tian Shang-di or the Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven, is worshipped as a protector by all walks of life, not only fishermen. His name is Zhen-wu and there are many legends about his origin and his deification. According to some legends, Zhen-wu was a butcher in his mortal life. But another story claims that he was originally a prince who became deified because of his enlightenment and courage. He was appointed the commander of the twelve heavenly legions in order to fight against a grey tortoise and a black serpent who were terrorizing the earth. Zhen-wu wore a black robe and fought barefoot, with his long hair flowing over his shoulders. Finally, he defeated the tortoise and the serpent. His images in temples are depicted this way, with a tortoise under his left foot and a serpent under the right, denoting his victory over the evils manifest in these two forms.

Major celebrations of Bei-di-dan are held at Cheung Chau, Stanley, Tsing Yi Island and Mong Tseng Wai. The Temple of the Jade Vacuity on the island of Cheung Chau is the most spectacular Bei-di temple in Hong Kong. It is said plague broke out on Cheung Chau in 1777, and the islanders, who were mainly fishermen

from the Chao Zhou and Hui Zhou districts of Guangdong, then fetched an image of Bei-di from their home town in order to protect them. And in 1783 the islanders all contributed towards the building of the Bei-di temple (Savidge 1977:80).

Tian-hou-dan takes place on the twenty-third day of the third lunar moon. Tian-hou or the Heavenly Queen is the most famous sea goddess in Southeastern China. Her origins are nebulous. One of the most popular legends about her life on earth says that she was the daughter of a fisherman who lived in Fukien in the tenth century A.D.. After her death, still a virgin, at the early age of twenty-eight, her fame increased when people claimed, in story after story, that they saw her at sea, rescuing fishermen and protecting them from disasters. So, it is not difficult to understand the popularity of Tian-hou, as a sea goddess, among the fishing people in Hong Kong and many others who owe their livelihood to shipping.

Tian-hou-dan is one of the most spectacular and the most colourful festivals in Hong Kong. On that day, thousands of fishing people and their families and residents of coastal villages stop their work to

celebrate the birthday of Tian-hou. The largest and most impressive Tian-hou temple in Hong Kong is Tai Miao or the Great Temple at Joss House Bay in the Sai Kung District. On that day, fishing people from many parts of Hong Kong sail in their junks to make their annual pilgrimage to Joss House Bay.

Tan-gong-dan is observed on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. Tan-gong is a local boy-god who is capable of raising and quelling tempests. To the fishing people of Hong Kong, Tan-gong is another important deity after Tian-hou. The festival is celebrated in an area known as Ah Kung Ngam in the Shau Ki Wan District on the eastern tip of Hong Kong Island.

Guan-di-dan or the Birthday of the God of Martial Arts (also translated as the God of War) is celebrated on the thirteenth day of the fifth lunar moon. Guan-di is variously known as Guan-di or Emperor Guan, Guan-gong or Duke Guan, and Guan-yu. He was an historical figure who lived in the Three Kingdoms Period (190/220-589 A.D.). After his death, numerous honorary titles were conferred upon him and his name became associated with a lot of popular tales and legends. This finally led him to deification. He was granted the title of

"Di" or Emperor in 1594 A.D.. Guan-di has been conceived as patron god of various trades and professions. This has gradually made him become a kind of god of wealth. In Hong Kong, a great number of homes and shops honour a picture or an image of Guan-di. And in virtually every police station in Hong Kong there is a shrine dedicated to Guan-di.

Hou-wang-dan is on the sixth day of the sixth lunar moon. It is widely believed that "Yang" was the surname of Hou-wang. Some villagers believe that the true identification of Hou-wang is a person called Yang Liang-jie (Leung, Kwong-hon 1980:79). From the tablets in his temples and from legends associated with him, we know that Hou-wang is admired and worshipped by people because of his loyalty to the last two Sung emperors, Di-si and Di-bing. It is said that these two emperors had fled for their lives and made their retreat via the present New Territories and Kowloon at the end of the Southern Song dynasty (1126-1279 A.D.).

Lu-ban-dan is celebrated on the thirteenth day of the sixth lunar moon. There is a Lu-ban temple in Kennedy Town on Hong Kong Island. Lu-ban is the patron of carpenters and builders. He is said to have been

born in the ancient state of Lu in present Shandong Province. By the time he was forty, he became the best carpenter of his time. Legend has it that Lu-ban repaired the Pillars of Heaven and built a palace for Xi-wang-mu or the Empress Mother of the Western Heaven.

Qi-tian Da-sheng-dan or the Birthday of the Monkey God is celebrated on the sixteenth day of the eighth lunar moon. There is a Monkey God temple located in the Sau Mau Ping housing estate in Kowloon. Inside the temple, there is a spirit medium who speaks for the Monkey God. There is also an interpreter who relays the medium's messages to the believers. The celebration of the festival in Sau Mau Ping includes a fascinating demonstration of supernatural power by spirit mediums. The chief medium first prays until he goes in to trance. Then he proves that the Monkey God has taken over his body by plunging his hands into a pot of boiling oil, climbing a tall ladder which is made of upturned and razor-sharp knives, and running through a sixty-foot-long fire of blazing charcoal. Finally, the medium uses a sword to cut his tongue. He then licks pieces of green and yellow paper with his bleeding tongue and the papers are distributed to worshippers who have made subscriptions to the temple.

These blood-stained papers are used as talismans against evil spirits and sickness, as well as to bring good fortune. After this demonstration, other observances and celebrations continue for hours and it ends with a grand feast.

The Ordering of Time in the Annual Cycle

Every rite has its own origin. The original meaning may be enriched, distorted or even concealed by legends associated with it in its later development. Festivals are no exceptions. As Latsch (1984:9) notes, some festivals, such as Qing-ming-jie, Tuan-wu-jie, and Zhong-giu-jie, lost their original meaning, replacing it by new religious content or coming to commemorate historical personages or events. Some others, such as Qi-che-jie and Chong-yang-jie, were enriched with myths and legends.

In the course of development, various rites tend to group themselves into systems according to their nature and attributions. The process involves mechanisms of opposition, modification, assimilation and repetition. Within the same culture, rather than

monopolized by just one type of ritual system, it seems that various ritual systems often coexist. Although there must be a certain extent of overlap, each type of ritual system find its specific niche in terms of participants, time, space, and of course, its functions and meanings in the social life of both the collectivity and individuals.

Rites belonging to the same ritual system form a syntagmatic structure. This syntagmatic structure repeats itself in definite periods which are closely associated with the social life of both the collectivity and the individuals concerned. The most common types of such periods are the annual cycle in the macrocosm and the life cycle in the microcosm. As a result of self-repetition period after period, each of the rites in the syntagmatic structure must be preceded and followed by another rite which belongs to the same ritual system.

In the term "shi-jie", the word "shi" means "time" and the word "jie" means "nodes". Therefore, the term "shi-chi" can be literally translated as "time nodes". Here the literal meaning implies a vivid metaphor which is used by the Chinese in conceptualizing the nature of

shi-jie. Accordingly, to the Chinese, shi-jie are "nodes" in time. Like the nodes in a bamboo stalk, shi-jie divide the annual cycle into sections. In other word, the annual cycle is punctuated with shi-jie. In fact, one of the most important functions of shi-jie is the ordering of time in the annual cycle. Furthermore, all the shi-jie are commonly celebrated by the majority of Chinese people with little variation among different local traditions and among people with different occupations only. This implies that the conceptualization of time in the annual cycle is quite unique among the Chinese.

The significance of festivals in the ordering of time has already been pointed out by Leach when he writes:

> The interval between two successive festivals of the same type is a "period," usually a named period, e.g. "week," "year." Without the festivals, such periods would not exist, and all order would go out of social life. We talk of measuring time, as if time were a concrete thing waiting to be measured; but in fact we create time by creating intervals in social life. Until we

have done this there is no time to be measured (Leach 1961:130).

Like the shi-jie, the shen-dan are basically held on definite dates. There are only a few local exceptions in which the exact date for the birthday of a particular god is different from the normal ones. Although the shi-jie are usually associated with legends about gods or deified persons, basically none of them is celebrated for the birthday of a god or a deified person. Unlike the shi-jie, the shen-dan are held exclusively for the celebration of the birthdays of gods or deified persons. Furthermore, almost all of what I mean by shi-jie here are labeled with the word "jie" as the last character in their names, such as Qing-ming-jie, Tuan-wu-jie and Zhong-qiu-jie. And it seems that all the shen-dan are labeled with the word "dan" as the last character in their names, such as Che-gong-dan, Tu-di-dan and Hong-sheng-dan.

One obvious difference between shi-jie and shen-dan can be found in the way the deities are entertained on these occasions. Apparently, at least in the Hong Kong region, whereas performances of Chinese operas always constitute the most important and certainly the

most expensive part of every large scale celebration of shen-dan, such performances are never found in the celebrations of shi-jie.

In fact, the main purpose of the performances of the Chinese operas in the celebrations of shen-dan is to please the deities concerned, and relatively less importantly, to entertain the human audience. The significance of this purpose, as Barbara Ward (1985:165-166) also noted, is in fact clearly reflected in the term for this kind of operas which is locally known as shen-gung-xi or god revere operas. Furthermore, during the celebration of a shen-dan, the stage of the hsi-peng or temporary theatre should be erected directly opposite the main entrance to the temple concerned in such a way that the opera performers directly face the principal deities of the temple. With this arrangement, the deities inside the temple can watch the shen-gung-xi. In case the physical relief of the site does not allow the stage to be erected in front of the temple, either a shen-peng, which acts as a temporary shrine, or a kind of "royal box" (Ward 1979:25) is constructed facing the stage. These arrangements clearly indicate "the religious significance of the plays as offerings" (Ward

1985:166). It is believed that if these observances are not properly followed, as in the following example, the result may be fatal:

> One land village whose patron is Tin Hau once failed to give the opera at a site where the Tin Hau image in the temple could see it; during the year several prominent villagers died, and the following year more care was taken to make sure that there was a direct line of sight from the temple to the opera state (Anderson 1972:14-15).

Certainly, the human audiences themselves are conscious of the fact that the operas are in fact offerings to the deities, and this is clearly stated in words in the special issues published to celebrate the festivities, and on the _fa-pai_ or flower boards displayed on these occasions.

Another obvious difference between _shi-jie_ and _shen-dan_ lies in the types of rituals associated with them. In Hong Kong, whereas all the _shen-dan_ are associated with rituals performed by Taoist or Buddhist priests, we never find such associations in the case of _shi-jie_. Of course, for a specific _shen-dan_, not every community who celebrates it employs Taoist or Buddhist

priests to perform rituals. It depends on the scale of the celebration. But on every occasion of shen-dan, these specialists are called in to perform rituals in the communities who celebrate it. In most of these cases, the rituals are performed by naam-mo-lo. For example, rituals are performed by naam-mo-lo to celebrate the birthday of Kuan-yin on the nineteenth day of the second lunar moon at the Kuan-yin Temple in Pa Sha Wan. The birthday of Da-wang is celebrated every year at the Da-wang Temple in Kam Tsin with a Hong-chao which is also performed by naam-mo-lo. And in Kau Sai, again a Hong-chao is performed at the Hong-sheng Temple by naam-mo-lo to celebrate the birthday of Hong-sheng.

In Hong Kong, shi-jie are never celebrated with remarkable rituals performed by Taoist or Buddhist priests comparable to those of the shen-dan. At most, ritual specialists are employed to perform some minor rituals only in the celebration of a specific shi-jie. For example, on the occasion of Tuan-wu-jie or the Dragon Boat Festival, naam-mo-lo are sometimes called in to dot the eyes of a new dragon boat with red paint in order to make the dragon boat more spiritual and energetic.

However, even though the distinction between shi-jie and shen-dan is so obvious, very few, if any, of the writers on Chinese religion explicitly distinguish between them.

CHAPTER 5 OTHER PERIODIC RITES

> "Rituals are the signboards of life." (Martha N. Fried and Morton H. Fried, Transitions: Four Rituals in Eight Cultures)

Dian-deng

Childbirth is undoubtedly one of the most important crises in traditional Chinese life. The seriousness of the situation is intensified by a combination of two factors: the importance of continuing the male line and the high mortality rate for both mothers and infants in traditional China.

Traditionally, when a woman is pregnant, she does not go to a doctor but continues to work in the fields. Labor normally takes place in the woman's customary bed (Osgood 1975:105), with the assistance of an experienced local midwife and may be a few old women as well.

It is believed that Tai-shen or the God of the Pregnant Womb enters the pregnant woman's room and stays there during her entire period of gestation and labor. Tai-shen is greatly feared and every effort is

tried not to disturb him. For example, cleaning or sweeping is prohibited in the bedroom because it arouses the Tai Shen who may harm the baby or cause an abortion (Fried and Fried 1980:52).

By the end of the first month after birth, the baby is said to be man-yue or full-moon. The baby is dressed up in fine clothes and a feast called man-yue-jiu or full-moon feast is held to mark the event. At the feast, chicken and hong-ji-dan or red-dyed eggs are served. The family and friends of both the paternal and maternal sides are invited to the feast. The guests bring for the baby presents with auspicious meaning.

In many traditional villages in the New Territories, a ritual locally known as Dian-deng or Lighting the Lanterns would be performed each year on the fifteenth day of the first lunar moon.

Basically, the Dian-deng ritual is held at the expanded fang or the expanded jia-zu level[1]. The ritual would be performed in an ancestral hall dedicated to the founding ancestor of the jia-zu. If, within the jia-zu, one of the fang owns an ancestral hall exclusively belonging to the fang, the members of

this fang would most probably perform the Dian-deng ritual in both ancestral halls.

In the jia-zu, all the parents who bore a a new-born male in the preceding year have to participate in the Dian-deng ritual and make subscriptions to cover the expenses. The names of these new-born males are usually recorded in a registration book which is kept in the ancestral hall or by an elder of the jia-zu. Later, these names would be added to the genealogy book of the jia-zu. It should be noted that only those who have participated in the Dian-deng ritual are admitted as members of the jia-zu (for example, Baker 1968:48, Watson 1975:148n), and as a consequence, possess the exclusive rights of being a true member of both the jia-zu and the village. In some local villages such as Kam Tsin, the admission is called ru-zu or entering the jia-zu.

However, in some other villages such as Yuen Kong, people who belong to the same village but have different surnames may also jointly perform the Dian-deng ritual. In such cases, the ritual would be normally performed in the village temple which is the sacred symbol of the village as a unity.

Now, let us look at two contrasting "liminal" situations in order to have a better understanding of what is meant precisely by "a true member of the jia-zu" from the emic point of view. I came across these interesting cases in 1987 when I was doing my fieldwork in Kam Tsin.

In Kam Tsin, if a new-born male dies before his parents have taken him to participate in the Dian-deng ritual, he has never been and will never be admitted as a true member of the Hau zu, the founders of the village. His name will not be written in the genealogy book and no tablet which bears his name will be placed inside the ancestral hall of the Hau zu. It seems simply that in the history of the Hau zu, no such "social person" ever exists. His face can only haunt the memories of his family members and kins.

We have just seen how a baby, who is biologically related to the Hau zu, is excluded from being a true member of the Hau zu genealogically. How about the opposite? Can a person who is biologically unrelated to the Hau zu be admitted as a true member of the Hau zu genealogically by some means?

In the past, there were some cases in which

abandoned babies, or even children, were taken back home and reared by the Haus in Kam Tsin. These abandoned babies were usually found on the outskirts of the village or on the roadside outside the village. The villagers believed that the biological parents of these abandoned babies were most probably outsiders who could not bear the burden of rearing the babies. In the old days, life was hard in most of the New Territories villages. If the baby was a female, usually she would be taken in as a xin-bao-zai or child daughter-in-law[1], rather than just as an adopted daughter.

If the abandoned baby was a male, he would be taken in as an adopted son especially by those who had no son of their own. But they must also be taken by their new parents to attend the Dian-deng ritual in order to be admitted as true members of the Hau zu and bear the surname Hau, that is, ru-zu. But beside going through the routine ritual process of the Dian-deng ritual, their new parents had to give a ten-dollar li-shi or red packet and six buns to each men-tou or household of the Hau zu in Kam Tsin. Even if the adopted son was already a child when he was adopted, the requirements were the same.

Accordingly, although blood-tie is an essential factor, it is not always a guarantee or a must in deciding jia-zu membership. Being born to a member of the jia-zu does not guarantee a new-born male to be a true member of the jia-zu due to the fact that the membership is counted genealogically but not simply biologically. Only the Dian-deng ritual can guarantee him to be so. If necessary, the Dian-deng ritual can also grant an outsider membership of the jia-zu, though it is uncommon in practice. Here, the Dian-deng ritual is the only key for opening the door which leads to the big family of the jia-zu. Definitely, Dian-deng is a kind of ritual for which van Gennep (1909) coined the term "*les rites de passage*".

Zuo-she

In some New Territories villages, there still exists an age-old communal celebration known as Zuo-she or Doing the She at the shrines dedicated to Da-wang at various times of the year. For example, the villagers of Pak Kong in the Sai Kung District still practise the Zuo-she at the shrine of Da-wang on the fifteenth day of the second lunar moon (Faure 1982:176-178).

The major celebration of Zuo-she consists of a communal feast at the shrine of Da-wang. A most distinctive feature of the practice is that a live pig is slaughtered and it is left whole and uncooked when it is sacrificed at the shrine. The responsibility for preparing the feast is often shared among the villagers by means of a rota. Very often, the rota is written on a wooden board known as the she-pai or she board. In the case of Pak Kong, the villagers are divided into five groups and a five-year rota is set up whereby the responsibility for preparing the feast shifts among these groups. The rota was recorded on a she-pai which is kept in the ancestral hall of the Loks (Faure 1982:176-178).

Hong-chao

In Kam Tsin, there is an annual communal celebration of the birthday of Da-wang and Fu-te, the two principal deities in the village temple. The celebration is held on the nineteenth day of the first lunar moon and lasts for three days. In the first two days, a Hong-chao or Great Audience is held inside the village temple. The Hong-chao aims to thank the

deities for the blessing they have brought to the community in the preceding year, to pray for favours in the coming year, and to get rid of all the evil things out of the community.

The Hong-chao is performed by three naam-mo-lo accompanied by twelve chao-shou. The chao-shou or the heads of the audience, whose main duty is to participate in the Hong-chao on behalf of the whole community, are chosen beforehand by divination inside the village temple on the third day of the first lunar moon. Only members of the Hau zu have the exclusive right to compete for the posts of chao-shou which they conceived as highly honourable. During the Hong-chao, the head of the chao-shou always holds in his hands a book called yi-man which includes statements about the Hong-chao as well as a name list of all the household heads of the Hau zu. Another copy of the statements and the name list can be found on a long sheet of red paper called ren-yuan-bang, which is posted on the front wall of the village temple during the Hong-chao.

Like all other rituals performed by the naam-mo-lo, the Hong-chao begins with lengthy sessions of chanting and ritual performances inside the village

temple in the evening of the first day. Soon, a pig is slaughtered and, similar to the case in Zuo-she, it is left whole and uncooked when it is offered on the altar table inside the temple. Just after midnight, the pig is taken away from the altar table and is chopped into a number of pieces. These pieces of raw meat are later divided among all the household heads in roughly equal shares inside the temple. This is called fen-zhu-rou or sharing the pork. This kind of symbolic sharing, which is also found in some other observances like the grave visiting in Qing-ming-jie or Chong-yang-jie, is used to redefine symbolically membership in a group and to remind the members of this. Only members of the group have the exclusive right to have a share.

In the afternoon of the second day, one of the naam-mo-lo, accompanied by the head of the chao-shou, goes in procession through all the lanes inside the village. When the procession comes before each house which is still inhabited by members of the Hau zu, the naam-mo-lo enters the house and uses spiritual water to give ritual cleansing. One member of the household would put a variety of "rubbish" inside a red paper boat which is carried by the head of the chao-shou. This ritual process is called pa-chuan or rowing boat.

The "rubbish" put inside the paper boat includes beans, charcoal and feathers, which symbolize disease[2] and evil things. Besides these, incense, candles and ritual papers are also put inside the paper boat and are offered to ghosts. Finally, the paper boat and its contents are burned at the outskirts of the village.

In the afternoon of the second day, just before the end of the Hong-chao, a naam-mo-lo begins to read the text of the yi-wen inside the temple to both the villagers and the deities concerned. Those members of the Hau zu who are more serious about this would come and listen carefully to see if their names have been missed, misspelled or not. They would also check the ren-yuan-bang to see whether their names have been missed, wrongly written or not. If any of them is missed, it is no less than the worst curse because, metonymically, it means that the person concerned is regarded as already dead. In case it really happens, a special ritual must be performed to offer an apology and to correct the "lethal" mistake.

In fact, the name list means something more than that. At the end of the Hong-chao, both the yi-wen and the ren-yuan-bang are burnt in order that the heavenly

spirits can receive it and bless all the households mentioned on the lists. Accordingly, only members of the Hau zu can enjoy the favour of the deities.

Hong-chao is also observed in Kau Sai and Fanling. Kau Sai is a fishing village in the Sai Kung District and Fanling is a farming village founded by the Pangs, one of the "five great surnames" in the New Territories. In Kau Sai, the Hong-chao is held on the celebration of the Birthday of Hong-sheng and lasts for two days. But in Fanling, the Hong-chao begins on the fifteenth day of the first lunar moon and also lasts for two days. In this case, the Hong-chao follows the dian-deng ritual which is held from the eighth day to the fourteenth day of the first lunar moon.

Yu-lan

The term "Yu-lan-pan" comes from the Sanskrit *Ullambana* which means "to be suspended upside down" (for example, Tun 1900:62). In Buddhist tradition, there is a practice of making donations to Buddhist priests on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar moon. The custom, commonly known as Yu-lan-pan Hui or Yu-lan-

pan Gathering, is considered a kind of meritorious conduct and the merit "earned" by this means can be used to repay one's ancestors of the past seven ascending generations, who are thought to be suffering in the underworld.

According to another Buddhist story, once Mu-lian, a filial son and also one of Buddha's disciples, visited the underworld and found that his mother had been reborn among the hungry ghosts. When he tried to feed his mother with an alms-bowl, the food burnt into flames in his mother's mouth. Mu-lian consulted Buddha who instructed him to put all kinds of different-tasting fruits into basins, and offer them to all the hungry ghosts of the ten directions (the eight compass point, together with above and below) on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar moon. Mu-lian followed Buddha's instruction and his mother could then be fed (for example, Wang, Shi-jing 1981:196).

The custom of Yu-lan-pan Hui can be traced back at least to the Northern and Southern dynasties (420-589 A.D.). But it seems that the practice of Mu-lian was later incorporated into the custom of Yu-lan-pan Hui. Since then, the custom of feeding the hungry ghosts on

the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar moon has become more and more popular.

In contemporary Hong Kong, there are large scale communal celebrations locally known as Yu-lan Sheng-hui or Yu-lan Magnificent Gatherings which are held within the seventh lunar moon. Interesting enough, apparently, all the Yu-lan Sheng-hui are organized by the Chao Zhou people, a dialect group who speak the Chao Zhou dialect. The main programs of the Yu-lan Sheng-hui include performances of rituals and Chao Zhou operas. The rituals, which aim at relieving the deceased ancestors and the ghosts from suffering, are usually performed by priests of the Buddhist tradition or the Te-jiao[3] tradition. In the rituals, lengthy prayers are chanted to sermonize both the mortals and the immortals, to beg the deities concerned for a general amnesty, and to relieve the souls from suffering. Food is symbolically distributed among the hungry ghosts. Large quantities of spirit money and paper clothing are burned as offerings to both the deceased ancestors and the ghosts.

In the Taoist tradition, the celebration of Zhong-yuan-jie is also held on the fifteenth day of the

seventh lunar moon. Zhong-yuan-jie is one of the festivities of the triad known as San-yuan or the Three Primordials. On this day, Taoists priests perform rituals to relieve the orphan souls and all kinds of ghosts from suffering. Whereas the ritual is called Pu-du in many other places (for example, Pang 1977), it is commonly known in Hong Kong as Ji-you or Pu-shi (see Leung, Chor-on 1984:99-104 for more details).

In Chinese folk religion, it is said that the gates of the underworld are opened from the first day of the seventh lunar moon to the last day of the moon. The ghosts thus released are free to come to our world to attend the banquets offered to them during this period. In Hong Kong, besides the magnificent communal rituals of Yu-lan Sheng-hui and Ji-you, there are also many smaller ones performed by most of the families individually. This kind of minor ritual, which is locally known as Shao-yi or Burning Clothes, is performed by the family members themselves and no priests are involved. The ritual is performed at night in a small open area outside the house. Usually, burning candles and incense are inserted into the soil if any, or into a long container filled with sand. Both the candles and the incense are arranged in two

rows. Cooked food, spirit money and paper clothing are offered on the ground.

Da-jiao

In traditional Chinese communities, Jiao has been an important festival both for the state and for the local communities. Originally, the word "jiao" meant "the offering of wine and incense in respect" (Saso 1972:34), or simply meant "sacrifice" (Liu 1974:1). After the rise of Taoism in the Han dynasty, the word "jiao" was used by Taoist priests to refer to those rituals in which food was displayed and offered to heaven and constellations (Fu 1980:121-122). Still later, the word was used in a broader sense.

In Hong Kong, celebrations of the Jiao are commonly known as Da-jiao and they almost exclusively belong to the same type locally known as "Tai-ping Qing-jiao". Literally, "Tai-ping" means "Pacific" and "Qing-jiao" means "Pure Jiao". An emic description of the main purpose of this type of Da-jiao is clearly stated in a special issue published for the celebration of the Tai-ping Qing-jiao held in Lam Tsuen:

> Every farming village celebrates the Jiao periodically. Although there may be local variations, the purpose of the festival is unique, which is to drive away evil things, to relieve orphan souls from suffering, to receive blessing and peacefulness, to entertain both the deities and the people, and to pray for the fortune of the community (LCXJJWYH 1981:4).

In Hong Kong, with extremely few exceptions such as the one celebrated in Cheung Chau which usually falls in the fourth lunar moon, Tai-ping Qing-jiao is often held during the tenth or the eleventh lunar moon though the exact dates are chosen by a specialist diviner. In this aspect, it is quite similar to the Qing-jiao in Taiwan (see Saso 1972:111).

Tai-ping Qing-jiao is celebrated periodically and the interval in between varies according to local tradition. In many cases, the interval is ten years. But in other cases the interval may be one year (for example, in Cheung Chau), five years (for example, in Lin Fa Tei) or six years (for example, in Sha Kong Wai). The longest interval is the one celebrated in Sheung Shui in which the interval is sixty years.

The main programs of Tai-ping Qing-jiao usually last for three to five days. During the proper days of the Da-jiao, the whole community concerned has to be kept purified and there are a lot of taboos. Some taboos have to be strictly followed. For examples, no life should be killed and all the local inhabitants as well as the visitors have to abstain from meat.

The major rituals of Da-jiao are performed by the naam-mo-lo or chanting fellows. Besides these rituals, usually Chinese operas are also performed to entertain both the people and the deities concerned. The operas are performed in a large temporary theatre called xi-peng. Several temporary shrines known as shen-peng are also constructed facing the stage of the xi-peng. During the Da-jiao, all the local deities are invited to the shen-peng so that they can watch the theatrical performances. In addition, a temporary kitchen is also constructed in which only vegetarian food is prepared.

A typical Da-jiao consists of several types of major rituals which aim at different purposes (see Leung, Chor-on 1984 for details). Before the proper days of the Da-jiao, a ritual is performed to inform

the heavenly divinities that the community concerned is going to have a Da-jiao. The ritual is performed three times on different dates before the major rituals of the Da-jiao actually begin. The message is written on a document called biao, and the ritual is known as Shang-biao or Presentation of the Biao. After the last biao is presented, there is an opening ceremony of the tan or the main altar in which the naam-mo-lo perform most of the major rituals. The ceremony, which is called Qi-tan or Opening the Tan, marks the beginning of abstention from meat.

On each of the proper days of the Da-jiao, a ritual known as Xing-chao or the Audience is performed three times a day to make offerings at all the shrines, including the temporary ones. Each of the Xing-chao is followed immediately by a Bai-chan or Ritual of Repentance. The aim of the ritual is to repent, which is one of the main theme of the Da-jiao.

Another main theme of the Da-jiao is a symbolic purification and a renewal of the community. For example, Michael Saso (1972) stated that the Jiao festival is in fact a kind of cosmic renewal. On the first night of the Da-jiao, a Fen-deng ritual or

Dividing the Lanterns is performed in which burning candles are shared among the yuan-shou or the Heads of the Da-jiao. The ritual symbolizes the reproduction of the forces of Yang that drive away darkness which symbolizes the forces of Yin. Following this the Jin-tan or Debarring from Entering the Tan is often performed in order to drive away all the evil spirits and to purify the tan or the main altar. And by the end of the Da-jiao, the Pa-chuan or Rowing Boat ritual is sometimes performed according to local tradition. In the ritual, a paper boat is carried through all the lanes within the village concerned. A variety of "rubbish" in the form of beans, charcoal and feathers, which symbolize diseases and evil things, are collected from each household and are carried away with the paper boat. At the end of the ritual, the paper boat and its contents are burnt at the outskirts of the village. This is a kind of ritual cleansing in which diseases and evil things are symbolically got rid of from the village.

Relieving the orphan souls from suffering is also a main theme of the Da-jiao. On the last night of the Da-jiao, the Ji-da-you or the Big Sacrifice to the Souls ritual is performed. In the ritual, lengthy

prayers are chanted to sermonize the souls, to beg the divinities for a general amnesty, and to relieve the souls from suffering. The souls are invited to enjoy a general banquet in which food is symbolically distributed and large quantities of spirit money and paper clothing are burned as offerings. On the second night of a typical five-day-six-night Da-jiao, there is also a Ji-xiao-you or a Small Sacrifice to the Souls ritual which has the same purpose as the Ji-da-you ritual but on a much smaller scale.

The last main theme of the Da-jiao is to pray for blessing. In fact, in the final analysis, most of the rituals performed in a Da-jiao are performed in order to earn the blessing from the deities concerned. This is most conspicuous in a ritual called Li-dou or Worshipping the Dipper, the main purpose of which is to pray for longevity. And as in the case of Hong-chao, a ren-yuan-bang with the names of all the native villagers concerned written on it is posted on a wall in a ritual called Ying-bang or Welcoming the Bang. All these people have to subscribe to the celebration of the Da-jiao. In return, they will receive the blessing from the deities.

Other major rituals usually found in a Da-jiao

include Ying-sheng or Welcoming the Highest Divinities, Zou-she-shu or Carrying the Document of Amnesty, and Fang-sheng or Set Living Creatures Free. In fact, the actual performance of the rituals in a Da-jiao may vary according to different local traditions and different Taoist sects. But the main themes of the Da-jiao mentioned above always remain basically the same.

CHAPTER 6 BOUNDARIES LOST? BOUNDARIES REGAINED?

> "Although we take theories into the field with us, these become relevant only if and when they illuminate social reality. Moreover, we tend to find very frequently that it is not a theorist's whole system which so illuminates, but his scattered ideas, his flashes of insight taken out of systematic context and applied to scattered data. Such ideas have a virtue of their own and may generate new hypotheses. They even show how scattered facts may be systematically connected!" (Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors)

From Magic to Religion

It should be noted that classification of religious phenomena in anthropology, to a great extent, still follows the demarcation lines set by our pioneers in the nineteenth century. Some of the categories such as prayer, sacrifice, divination and magic were derived from the study of classical and Hebrew religion (Beek 1975:55).

In fact, a lot of anthropological writings on religion have been devoted to clarification of some of those age-old categories and to testify their applicability. Among others, one of the most controversial issues in anthropology is the distinction between religion and magic. We may trace the origin of

the long debate on this distinction back to Tylor and Frazer.

With intellectualism as the criterion, Tylor did not consider magic in the context of religion, but regarded it as a pseudo-science and as "one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind" (Tylor 1871:100). Like Tylor, Frazer also regarded magic as a pseudo-science. But unlike Tylor, Frazer linked magic with religion and he thought that magical beliefs should precede religious beliefs. Also unlike Tylor, he considered not only methods of harmful magic, but beneficent ones as well. He further attempted to explain magical beliefs in terms of association of ideas. His distinction between homeopathic magic and contagious magic (Frazer 1890:11-12) indeed makes him go further than most other anthropologists in the classification of magical phenomena.

Durkheim (1915:59-63) based his distinction between magic and religion on the criterion of church or religious society. To him, there can be no religion without a church. This is in fact a way of reasserting his view on the importance of social groups. Magic is performed by individuals for the benefit of other

individuals and "There is no Church of magic" (ibid., p.60). However, as Radcliffe-Brown (1952:137) noted, it is difficult to apply this distinction in the study of the rites of simple societies. And like Tylor, Durkheim paid more attention to harmful magic than to beneficial magic. While religion contributes to maintenance of group sentiment, magic is anti-social in the sense that it is practised by individuals to gain their very personal ends.

Whereas neither Tylor nor Durkhiem considered the type of magic performed on behalf of the community, Malinowski described it fully in his work on the Trobriand islanders. And unlike Durkheim who excluded magic from the realm of the sacred, Malinowski thought that magic had more in common with religion than with the profane world. He further argued that both religion and magic arise from psychological needs. They are the means people used to alleviate anxiety in the face of uncontrollable and unpredictable situations.

For Malinowski, magic consists of the superstitious behaviour and belief through which individuals try to control nature, especially when

their technology are insufficient. Magic is a means to an end. Religion, being a body of self-contained acts which are themselves the fulfillment of their purpose, is more of an end. It is directed to specific ends and thus supplements technique. In the views expressed by Malinowski, whereas magical acts imply a manipulative attitude, religious acts are relatively more "prayerful, humble, and reverent" (Pelto and Pelto 1976:370).

The way to distinguish between "magic" and "religion" by Malinowski is widely accepted. For those who accept this, "magic" is viewed as a means to provide an immediate, pragmatic religious response to problems in normal situations, whereas "religion", in its narrower sense, only refers to specific situations with a much more latent problem content. However, some anthropological studies have already shown that the distinction is indeed not clear enough. For example, in an ethnoscience study it is found that Kapsiki magic and religion belong to the same semantic domain (Beek 1975:68).

In fact, if we probe further into the problem, we can find that the distinction between "magic" as a

manipulative means via the supernatural and "religion" as a more or less abstract theology which is approached by prayerful behaviour can easily be dismissed because:

> magical actions necessarily imply some theory of the gods, spirits, 'life-force', etc. And religion is not just abstract theology; it is something acted out, i.e. it is usually most manifest as 'magic'! Even less is religion necessarily concerned with remote and inaccessible gods or spirits - the latter, indeed, are usually anthropomorphic: the living in another guise or phase of existence (Worsley 1968:229).

It has been pointed out by some scholars (for example, Worsley 1968:229) that anthropologists are quite right to reject the old-fashioned distinction between "magic" and "religion". In fact, magic and religion, instead of being mutually exclusive entities, are woven together into magico-religious behaviour. For example, in a study of an occasional rite known as Da-xiao-ren or Beating the Small Person in the Hong Kong region, it is found that what the anthropologists have labeled as "magical" and "religious" acts are often found mingled in a single ritual (Chiao and Leung

1994:124).

It seems that folk are seldom conscious of the distinctions between "magical" and "religious" acts advocated by some anthropologists. Rather, when asked, sometimes they will themselves label some acts more "superstitious" than others. Of course, the distinction they make between "superstitious" or not may also differ greatly from that advocated by anthropologists.

For the ritual specialists, such as the naam-mo-lo, rather than employing the terms "religious" and "magical", they use the terms "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" to distinguish between different religious sects or between different ritual performances (for example, Saso 1974). For example, it seems that all the naam-mo-lo in the Hong Kong region claim themselves to belong to the Zheng-yi or the Orthodox One tradition. In fact, it is also clearly stated in their manuals and other written memorials such as the bang or placard. Zheng-yi is said to be an orthodox sect in the Taoist tradition. The term "orthodox" used here can best be explained as "belonging to one of the traditional sects of Taoism as a religion and deriving

from antiquity, that is, from China's earliest religions and historical origins" (Saso 1975:2).

In performing rituals such as those in a Da-jiao or a Hong-chao, the naam-mo-lo puts on a Taoist robe. The robe is red in colour on which the Ba-gua or Eight Trigrams, or eight golden cranes are embroidered. The chief priest puts on a small golden crown, whereas all the other priests put on a Taoist hat made of black cloth. All these imply that the naam-mo-lo belong to an orthodox sect. However, in a Da-jiao, there is a distinguished ritual called Da-wu or Performing Martial Arts. During the ritual, instead of wearing the usual Taoist robe and hat, the naam-mo-lo who performs the ritual dresses in a red apron and wears a red turban. It is explained that the naam-mo-lo has to dress in such a way because the Da-wu is a kind of ritual which is classified by the naam-mo-lo themselves as "heterodox", rather than the usual Zheng-yi ritual. In a Hong-chao, there is a ritual called Pi-sha-luo or Chopping the Sand Basket in which the naam-mo-lo also dresses in a red apron and a red turban. Again, this ritual is also considered by the naam-mo-lo as belonging to the "heterodox" tradition.

"Heterodox" Taoist sects are often looked down upon by Zheng-yi Taoist priests. However, it is interesting to find that, among the usual Zheng-yi rituals, the Zheng-yi naam-mo-lo also perform rituals of "heterodox" origin in a Da-jiao or a Hong-chao. The Zheng-yi Taoist priests themselves regard rituals of "heterodox" origin are magical. Here, we find that the term "magical" is used in a relative sense. For the anthropologists, even the Zheng-yi rituals may be regarded as "magical" because these rituals certainly imply a manipulative attitude via the supernatural. But for the Zheng-yi naam-mo-lo, it is the rituals which they considered as "heterodox" that are "magical", but not those of of their own. Again, as Weber also noted, we find a discrepancy in the conception of "magical" acts between anthropologists and native particioants:

> Quite a different distinction will be made by the person performing the magical act, who will instead distinguish between the greater or lesser ordinariness of the phenomena in question (Weber 1922:2).

The Stone and the Image

Max Weber remarked that "The strongly naturalistic orientation (lately termed 'pre-animistic') of the earliest religious phenomena is still a feature of folk religion" (Weber 1922:2). In fact, it is found (for example, De Vos 1984:4) that in many Asian cultures, the continuity of animism, animatism, and shamanistic beliefs coexists with the more universalistic traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. In the Chinese case, for example, instead of finding their own exclusive niches or even existing in antagonistic relationships, these highly diversified traditions often merge to a certain extent and mingle in the minds of the Chinese people. In the following paragraphs, let us look into the application of Feng-shui principles in real life in order to bring out some interesting points.

Feng-shui is based upon the belief that every locality has its special topographical features which indicate or modify the Qi or the Spiritual Breaths of the Cosmo. It is believed that the influences of nature, in the form of Qi, bear absolute sway over the fate of a man. For example, it is believed that the

burial place of the ancestors will exert an influence upon the future prosperity and misfortune of their descendants.

Therefore, essentially, the objective of Feng-shui is to judge and to manipulate the environment in order to bring about desirable effects. It integrates and makes use of several classical symbolic systems, such as the Qi, the Spirits of the Four Directions (the Azure Dragon in the east, the Red Bird in the south, the White Tiger in the west, and the Black Tortoise in the north), the Yin-Yang Theory, the Wu-xing Theory, the sexagenary cycle of the ten Celestial Stems, and the sixty-four gua in the Yi-jing.

According to Tylor (1871), the "minimum definition" of religion is "the belief in spiritual beings". For Tylor, the belief was more important than the ritual actions. However, it should be noted here, except the Spirits of the Four Directions, none of the other factors woven into the reckoning of Feng-shui are concerned with spiritual beings. Rather, it concerns the balance of natural forces and the tapping of "a mysterious fecundity" (Dore 1926:407) from the bowels of the earth which will influence the future prosperity

of his descendants. The Feng-shui xian-sheng himself is not a Taoist or Buddhist priest. He performs no rituals, but, working with a luo-pan or geomantic compass, examines the typographical features of the sites, locates the Azure Dragon, and studies the direction of wind and water. In this way, he can discover the sites where the beneficial influences predominate, or alter, by artificial means, the topographical features of the sites in order that the most favourite results may be achieved. Unlike priests, who do not have great esteem among the Chinese, Feng-shui xian-sheng have a scholarly status.

In the New Territories, the Feng-shui of a village is sometimes thought to have been damaged by a disturbance of the soil such as the building of a new road, or a change in the landscape such as the construction of a new building or the building of a new reservoir (for example, Hayes 1983:166-167). On these occasions, naam-mo-lo or Taoist priests are often employed to perform a special protective ritual called Dun-fu in order to restore the Feng-shui of the village.

Both meat and vegetarian food is offered. It is

explained that "since many spirits are invited to such a ceremony and one does not know their preferences, a variety of things should be made available to please them all" (Strauch 1980:148). Besides the presentation of offerings, the ceremony also consists of chanting of prayers, the burning of candles, incense and mock money. Five rod-like fu or charms made of bamboo or wood are affixed into a large pot which is filled with fresh sand. The pot is then placed in the appropriate location in order to counteract the harmful effects. Freshly cut tall stalks of bamboo, with the leaves still attached at the top are erected beside the pot. A paper charm is attached to each of the bamboo stalks.

According to an informant, a benevolent deity is invited in the ceremony to protect the community from malevolent spirits who may be aroused by the disturbance of the soil (Strauch 1980:148). However, from the writings on the five rod-like fu, we know that the five fu represent the commands from the five Tu-gong, or Duke of Earth, of the five directions (East, South, West, North and Centre). So actually, it is these five Tu-gong who are invited to prevent the evil spirits from bringing trouble to the people of the community.

As I have just mentioned, Feng-shui is essentially concerned with the balance of natural forces which are thought to bear absolute sway over the fate of a man. The Feng-shui xian-shang is neither a Taoist nor a Buddhist specialist, but an expert in the "pseudo-science". However, when the Feng-shui of a village is thought to have been damaged, rather than a Feng-shui xian-shang, several naam-mo-lo are called in to perform the Dun-fu ritual in order to restore the Feng-shui of the village. No technical measurement or calculation but performance of ritual is given by the naam-mo-lo. And rather than the Spiritual Breaths of the Cosmo, spiritual beings such as the Tu-gong become the ones to which the ritual is addressed. In this way, more religious elements are added to the application of Feng-shui which is relatively free of spiritual beings. The Taoist tradition of the naam-mo-lo and the practice of Feng-shui are found to be highly compatible. In fact, they become supplementary to each other and the two are intermingled in the minds of the Chinese apparently without causing any dissonance.

In Chinese cosmology, we find that the demarcation line between what we label as natural and what we classify as supernatural is quite ambiguous. Very

often, elements belonging to one of the two realms spill over into the other. In fact, as it is noted:

> Philosophically minded Chinese viewed man within the greater context of an all-embracing cosmic whole rather than, as in the monotheistic religions, giving him a position central to, yet at the same time aloof from, the non-human cosmos (Bodde 1975:1).

Man, natural beings, and supernatural beings are seen as members of a unitary world. And I think that it is due to this inclusive attribute, that religious belief and practice can co-exist in harmony with Confucianism which consists largely of "rationalistic structural principles and ethical value system" (Yang 1957:289) and "holds a dominant position in Chinese social institution" (ibid., p. 289).

Between and Betwixt: The Earth Gods

According to Reginald Johnston, in the territory of Weihaiwei in Northern China, no village possesses more than one Tu-di:

> no village in Weihaiwei, or elsewhere so far as I am aware, possesses more than one T'u Ti, though there may be two or more "surnames" or clans represented in the village (Johnston 1910:373).

But in the New Territories, we have a totally different picture. Let us look at a concrete example. Lam Tsuen, which is located in the Tai Po District of the New Territories, is a village alliance comprised of twenty-three member villages. According to a census report prepared by the villagers themselves (LCXJJWYH 1981:24), the total population in Lam Tsuen is 6,481 in 1981. Among the twenty-three member villages, five villages are inhabited by Punti people and the others by Hakka people. In the territory of Lam Tsuen, there are sixty-eight shrines dedicated to local deities such as Tu-di, Bo-gong and Da-wang. That means, on average, there are three shrines for these local deities in each of the member villages. In fact, a traditional village in the New Territories often has a shrine dedicated to the Da-wang and several shrines for the Tu-di and the Bo-gong.

The fact that Da-wang is variously known as She-ji, She-ji Da-wang, or She-tan enables us to trace back

the origin of the worship to the She system in ancient China:

> until recent years the New Territories remained an agricultural zone, and there natural rocks of roughly columnar shape, woods, and even individual trees are still worshipped as local deities, a sign of the persistence of the primitive "she" system (Kani 1082:155).

The She system can be traced back to the Xia dynasty (2205-1766 B.C.: unconfirmed by archaeology) or even further back to the legendary Pre-dynastic period (before the Xia dynasty). The She system was in fact the earliest form in which Earth was worshipped in China institutionally:

> The earliest form in which Earth was worshipped in China was as the spirit of the soil at the village *she* or altar to the spirit of the ground, which was the centre of village life ... (Day 1940:59)

Originally, She and Ji were treated as different deities. She was regarded as the God of Earth and Ji the God of Grains. Later, to the She was added the Ji and She-ji thus became gods of agriculture. In ancient China, the worship of She-ji was highly ranked and, in

fact, it was the exclusive duty of the emperor:

> In the official religion of China the worship of the spirits of the soil and grain fills a large place. They rank next below the imperial ancestors in the hierarchy of divine powers, above all the nature gods except Heaven and Earth. The emperor sacrifices to the spirits of the soil and grain who preside over the fertility of the whole empire, the provincial governors to those of their provinces, and so on down through the administrative subdivisions of the state. To the people themselves are left only the offering to the local spirit of the soil and grain at the village shrine, in which a representative of each family is presumed to be present, and the offering of the clan to the spirit of their own fields (Moore 1913:65).

As nature gods in ancient China, the She-ji had neither temples nor images. She-ji was worshipped at a shrine in the open space. This feature is still observed in the worship of Da-wang in contemporary New Territories villages. A typical shrine for Da-wang is an armchair-shaped structure which is made of bricks or

stones. One unique feature of the shrine is that it must be unroofed. When I was attending the celebration of Da-wang's birthday at Kam Tsin Village in 1982, I was told a legend which explained this unique feature of the Da-wang's shrine. The legend says that once there were no cows on earth and the farmers had a hard life. Da-wang felt pity on the farmers and tried to persuade the cows in heaven to come down to earth. He lied to the cows telling them that life on earth was very comfortable. He swore that if he was not telling the truth, he would let himself be punished by living in an unroofed structure in the future. The cows were moved and came down to earth. But soon they found that they had been cheated because they had to work very hard in the fields. On the other hand, because of cheating the cows, Da-wang was punished by living in an unroofed structure ever since. It should be noted that David Faure (1986:203) also collected a very similar story in the New Territories. So may be the story is quite popular in the village world of Hong Kong.

Tu-di was first mentioned in writing in the year 200 A.D. (Law and Ward 1982:33) but certainly the worship of Tu-di has a much longer history. On the other hand, the term Bo-gong is not found in classical

Chinese writings. It seems that Bo-gong is a local term specific to Southeast Asian Chinese (for example, Baker 1979a:2). According to some of my informants, Bo-gong is a specific term used by Hakka people. It is also said that Bo-gong is just the term used by Hakka people in referring to Tu-di (for examples, Segawa 1987:188, Zhang et. al. 1986:27).

However, reality is not always as neat as the picture given by a brief description. In fact, the distinctions between these territorial deities are frequently blurred. Very often, it is hard to tell whether a shrine is dedicated to a Tu-di or a Bo-gong just from its physical manifestation. Although a shrine for the Da-wang is always an armchair-shape structure, which makes it more distinctive, a shrine for the Tu-ti or even that for the Bo-gong sometimes also has a similar structure. It depends on how the villagers label it and it seems that the distinctions I have mentioned do not always apply.

In fact, these terms, especially in the distinction between Tu-di and Bo-gong, are often interchangeable in native usage. For example, when a villager is asked in separate questions to tell the

number of shrines dedicated to the Tu-di and that to the Bo-gong in his village, he may refer to the same ones in his answers. This may imply that Bo-gong is just the Hakka counterpart of Tu-di and the villager is conscious of it in giving his answers, or it may imply that even though Tu-di and Bo-gong are conceived as separate categories in some cases, the distinction between them is in fact not very clear.

Even worse, these terms are sometimes intermingled terminologically in native usage. In some cases, we find that some territorial deities are labeled as Da-wang Bo-gong, She-tan Bo-gong, Tu-di Bo-gong or She-ji Tu-di Da-wang (for example, Tanaka 1985:394-396). Why is there ambiguity concerning the identity of these territorial deities?

To solve this problem, we have to look into the nature of these deities. As I have mentioned before, one of the most important functions of these territorial deities is to act as symbolic markers of boundaries between specific localities. For examples, the Men-kou Tu-di serves to mark the boundary between indoors and outdoors at the doorway of a house, and the Wei-men Bo-gong symbolically marks the boundary between

the walled village and the outside world at the main entrance of the walled village. As Leach (1976:33-34) has pointed out, all boundaries are artificial interpretations of what is naturally continuous. In principle, a boundary itself has no dimension. But the marker of the boundary will take up space and it is the nature of this marker of boundary that is ambiguous in implication.

> A boundary separates two zones of social space-time which are normal, time-bound, clear-cut, central, secular, but the spatial and temporal markers which actually serve as boundaries are themselves abnormal, timeless, ambiguous, at the edge, sacred (Leach 1976:33).

The ambiguity in the identity of these territorial deities, I believe, is partly due to the fact that they are worshipped as animistic objects without idols in most cases, and on the other hand, arises partly from their subsequent nature when they serve as markers of boundaries.

CHAPTER 7 BEHIND THE IMAGES

> "In ritual, we incorporate the gods into our bodies, return to Paradise, and with high righteousness destroy our fellows." (Barbara G. Myerhoff, "A Death in Due Time: Construction of Self and Culture in Ritual Drama")

The Problem of Effectiveness

I find that I would often be perplexed with the data I have collected in my field study on folk religion in Hong Kong if I followed Yang's (1961) method of classifying major temples by employing a functionalist approach. Now let me first present some concrete examples that rack one's brains to give convincing explanations of.

The most numerous and most popular temples we find in Hong Kong, and most probably also in Taiwan and Southeastern China, are those dedicated to Tian-hou or the Heavenly Queen. However, the most striking thing is that, in Hong Kong Tian-hou is popular not only among the fishing people as one would expect, but among the farmers and city dwellers as well. Here I am not just saying that many people from all walks of life worship Tian-hou. What I would like to emphasize is

the fact that Tian-hou is the major deity of many village temples or village alliance temples in the farming communities as well as the fishing communities of Hong Kong. How would Yang explain this phenomenon when he classifies temples according to the function of the main deity worshipped in each temple?

When I traced back the origins of some of the Tian-hou temples found in farming communities, I found that these communities were originally inhabited by fishermen. For example, the famous Tai Shue Ha Tian-hou Temple, which is the village alliance temple in Shap Pat Heung in the Yuen Long District, was built about three hundred and fifty years ago by a few Tanka or boat people. Unlike the present landscape, the site was very close to the sea at that time. The place to the west of the site was known as Tanka Wan and that to the east was known as Tanka Po. There has been a large tree at the site and the Tanka people built a small temple dedicated to Tian-hou under the cover of the tree. That is why the temple has been called Tai Shue Ha, which means under the big tree. In later periods, land reclamation occurred in the area. As a consequence, more and more people moved to the place and earned their living by farming. The fishing

community gradually changed into a farming community. Following the practice of the Tanka people, the farmers also worshipped Tian-hou at the temple. As the population grew, sooner or later the temple became a village alliance temple of Shap Pat Heung.

What interests me most is not the history of the temple itself, or whether every farming community which has a temple dedicated to a patron of seafarers was originally a fishing community. The most significant and heuristic question, I think, is why a patron of seafarers can become so popular among farmers. Why do the farmers not worship their own patrons such as Shen-nong or the Creator of Agriculture?

There is a Tian-hou Temple in Tap Mun, a fishing community in the Northeastern New Territories. Inside the temple, a tablet was set up in 1798 to commemorate the rebuilding of the temple. On the tablet, there is a statement (Faure et. al. 1986:53) which can be translated as follows:

> The rites of worship have a long history. As the saying goes, those who have made contribution to the people are worshipped, in order to praise

their virtues and to repay their contribution.

From this statement, we learn that one of the main reasons why a deity is worshipped is that he has made contribution to the welfare of the people. However, the meaning of contribution here is rather ambiguous. Certainly, to the fishing people, a sea goddess like Tian-hou who often protects them from disasters at sea can be said to have made contribution to them. But contribution here needs not to be confined to the meritorious service of patrons. It depends on interpretations made on occasions rather than a predetermined relationship between the deity and his worshipers. And this ambiguity in the meaning of contribution and the flexibility in making interpretations is one of the major factors that make the worshipping of deities in social reality deviate from a simple patron-oriented functional classification of deities.

In Hung Ling, which is a farming village in the Northern New Territories, there is a village temple dedicated to Hong-sheng, a benevolent patron of seafarers. Inside the temple, there is a stone tablet which was set up in 1866 to commemorate the rebuilding

of the temple. Besides the donation records, there is a statement on the tablet (Faure et. al. 1986:120) which is also worth mentioning here. The statement can be translated as follows:

> Hung Ling has a King Hong-sheng Temple. Here everyone gets what he prays for. Although the temple was built in this village, the light of kindness emitted from it in fact lights up all places in the four directions because it has shown to be ling.

From the statement, we learn that what makes the deity so popular among people from different places and of different occupations is that he is believed to be ling by his worshipers. The Chinese word "ling" has several meanings. In this context, it may be translated as "effective and able to give accurate predictions". In his paper, Feuchtwang (1989) translates the word "ling" as "extraordinary effectiveness" and "extraordinary intelligence". However, it should be noted that even though the word "ling" may be used as a noun, it is seldom used in this way by native speakers of Chinese. Rather, it is more commonly used as an adjective to describe persons,

deities or things. When the word is used of a person such as a fortune-teller, it means that the person can predict accurately in most cases. When a deity is said to be ling, it means that the deity always demonstrates to his worshippers manifestation of effectiveness and has an excellent reputation for accuracy of his forecasts and advice. Here, it implies that the deity is powerful and that a devotee of the deity can often succeed in getting what he prays for. The word "ling" can also be used to describe things which are, in most cases, associated with divination. For example, when the saying of a qian or fortune stick is said to be ling, it means that the qian gives an accurate prediction of what is asked about.

As the Chinese approach to religion is essentially practical and pragmatic, whether a deity is ling or not is very often the most important thing to the Chinese worshippers. It is especially remarkable in the urban areas or new settlement areas where temples are in most cases open to the public. A temple does not exclusively belong to the inhabitants of the community where the temple is situated. In this case, people can choose freely the most favourite temple they want to pay visits to and to make offerings at. And one of the

most important factors they would certainly consider in making up their choice is whether the principal deity is *ling* or not.

In Hong Kong, a few temples which are open to the public, such as the *Huang-da-xian* Temple in Wong Tai Sin and the *Che-gong* Temple in Shatin, are most spectacular because it is commonly believed that the principal deities of these temples are very *ling*. On occasions of festivities such as the birthday of the principal deity, thousands of people from all walks of life and different parts of Hong Kong dot the site. So the significance of whether a deity is *ling* or not transcends the demarcation set by patrons or communities. It is not limited by the sense of being a member of a specific group. Therefore, tolerance is another typical characteristic of the Chinese attitude towards religion. A person may attend the celebration of the birthday of his patron god with sincerity and at other times go to other deities who are widely believed to be very *ling*. In his conception, the two things are not mutually exclusive but can coexist without conflict or dissonance.

In the village world of the New Territories, *shen-*

ting, village temples or village alliance temples are relatively closed. People seldom visit these places which belong to other villages or village alliances other than their own. However, on some occasions they are invited to do so. For example, a ceremony known as Xin-xiang or walking to other villages may be held in some cases of Da-jiao, in which representatives of the villages who celebrate the Da-jiao visit the village temples and shrines of those neighboring villages who have good relationship with them. On occasions, some villagers may visit those public temples in urban areas or new settlement areas in which the principal deities are widely believed to be ling.

To the villagers, their own village temple is a sacred symbol of the village itself and the village alliance temple is a sacred symbol of the village alliance. Therefore, unlike those public temples, village temples and village alliance temples are highly exclusive. Except on special occasions like the Xin-xiang ceremony, no one dares to visit the village temple of another village. For such an act, even if it can be accepted by the villagers of the other village, may imply that the principal deity of his own village temple is not ling and cannot fulfill what he asks for

in his prayer. It is a great insult to the principal deity of his own village temple and he would certainly be blamed by his fellow villagers. As a consequence, the best thing the villagers can do is to boast that the principal deity of their village temple is very ling. This may be sometimes achieved by holding a large-scale celebration on the birthday of the deity.

The reason why a Tian-hou temple was first built in a community which is now a farming community may be due to different local historical factors. The case of Tai Shue Ha Tian-hou Temple in Shap Pat Heung illustrates just one of the most popular patterns. But with the fact that whether a deity is ling or not is often more significant than whether the deity is a patron of other people, it is not difficult to understand why the sea goddess Tian-hou is popular in farming communities as well as in fishing communities.

In fact, all rituals are efficacious to a certain extent merely by their taking place:

> In ritual, doing is believing. Ritual dramas especially are elaborately staged and use presentational more than discursive symbols, so that our senses are aroused and flood us with

> phenomenological proof of the symbolic reality which the ritual is portraying. By dramatizing abstract, invisible conceptions, it makes vivid and palpable our ideas and wishes, and, as Geertz has observed, the lived-in order merges with the dreamed-of order. Through its insistence on precise, authentic, and accurate forms, rituals suggest that their contents are beyond question authoritative and axiomatic (Myerhoff 1984:151-152).

In this sense, they are expressive and communicative. A village temple is a manifestation of the contractual relationship between the principal deity of the temple and the people of the community, as well as a sacred symbol used to express the solidarity of the villagers themselves. The contractual relationship between the principal deity and the villagers is maintained under the conditions that the villagers have to pay visits to the principal deity constantly and to make offerings, and in return, the villagers are blessed by the principal deity. Communal celebrations of festivities at the temple, such as the celebration of the birthday of the principal deity, constantly renew this implicit contractual

relationship.

The word ling is in fact a key for us to understand many problems in the studies of Chinese religion.

The Concept of Pollution

As I have mentioned before, a ritual called Pa-chuan is usually performed on the last day of a Hong-chao or a Da-jiao. The ritual is performed by a naam-mo-lo, accompanied by the head of the chao-shou in the case of Hong-chao, or the head of the yuan-shou in the case of Da-jiao. They go in procession through all the lanes inside the villages concerned. When they come before a house, the naam-mo-lo enters the house and use holy water to give ritual cleansing of all the domestic shrines. A member of the household would put incense, candles, ritual papers, and a variety of "rubbish" inside a red paper boat which is carried by the head of the chao-shou or the yuan-shou. The "rubbish" being carried away by the paper boat includes beans, charcoal and feathers, which symbolize diseases and evil things. The incense, candles and ritual papers are offerings

for ghosts. Finally, the paper boat together with the "rubbish" and the offerings are taken away from the village and are burnt up on the outskirts of the village. This is a kind of ritual cleansing. Diseases and evil things are symbolically taken away from each household by the paper boat and are finally sent away by the burning.

Very often, ritual cleansing is carried out by performing precautionary sanitary measures. Disposal or renovation of old things signifies spiritual and social renewal. By means of deliberate manipulation of ritual symbols, a state of personal and cosmic renewal is achieved. This kind of ritual cleansing is in fact very popular in Chinese folk religion.

A few days before the Chinese New Year, every household begins its complete house cleaning. On New Years Eve, each family member should bathe with green leaf water. This washing symbolizes getting rid of all the bad, the unlucky, and the evil things. On New Year's Day, people have to abstain from meat, eating such food as dried bamboo shoots, mushrooms and lettuce. And during the New Year period, people put on new clothes and greet each other with lucky sayings.

All these acts are in fact rituals of self-purification. It signifies a renewal of the microcosm.

After the death of a person, people believe that both the physical and the social arenas closely associated with the deceased are densely shrouded in a mist of Yin-qi or breaths of the Yin principle. In a certain sense, we may say that the arenas are contaminated. And a mist of Yin-qi provides a most suitable environment for the demons or other evil spirits to exert their power of influence, just like water is to fish. People who come in contact with the contaminated physical or social arenas expose themselves to the danger of demonic influence.

The funeral rites, the rules of mourning, as well as the location of the grave which is usually far away from settlement areas, are all precautions against demonic influence.

Mary Douglas believes that some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order:

> For I believe that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing

transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created (Douglas 1966:4).

Pollution beliefs certainly derive from rational activity, from the process of classifying and ordering experience. They are, however, not produced by strictly rational or even conscious processes but rather as a spontaneous by-product of these processes (Douglas 1975:58).

The Accumulation of Merit

George Moore (1913:77) stated that in Chinese folk religion the observances of mourning, classical as well as popular, bear witness to the more primitive belief that death is the work of demons. But it seems that only in some of the cases will Chinese people attribute death simply to demonic influence. Rather, they attribute death to an orchestra of belief systems. These belief systems can co-exist as relatively

independent systems, but they are also interrelated with a certain degree of congruity to form a loosely integrated supra-structure.

In Chinese folk religion, life is often attributed to a kind of predestination. In Confucianism, for example, the fate and the life span of a person is thought to be predestined by tian-ming or the arrangements predetermined by Heaven. It is thought that tian-ming is absolute and one should follow what is thought to be natural because it is the way to be in accord with tian-ming. This is reflected in many popular sayings. And in the belief system centered on the Ba-zi or the Eight Characters, it is thought that the date and time of birth can influence every moment of a person's fortune. Therefore it also implies a sense of predestination.

On the other hand, Chinese folk religion is much influenced by the Buddhist tradition. Philosophical or doctrinal Buddhism advocates withdrawal from the world and disengagement from both good and bad actions. The world and the self are merely illusory ephemeral phenomena. Both good and bad actions, which are governed by the *karmic* process of cause and effect, are

in the final analysis the sources of *dukkha* or suffering (Tambiah 1968:41).

Because of their secular preoccupations, the folk cannot attain the *Nirvana* ideals of death or deathness existence. They cannot escape from suffering, death and the cycle of rebirth (Tambiah 1968:41). Instead, they seek, at a lower level, the state of a prosperous rebirth. This can be attained by the laymen themselves in their daily life through the practice of merit-making.

But in Chinese folk religion, the Buddhist tradition is mingled with various religious traditions and the conceptions of "life" and "death", "this world" and the "other world" are not purely Buddhist in popular religious thought. The folk, with a calculus mind, do believe that the fate and the life span of a person is a function of the deeds he has done in this life and in the life before this as well. But they also believe that, with the summation result of the deeds as reference, the exact life span of a person is finally determined by a variety of deities not belonging to the Buddhist tradition, such as Tai-sui or the Minister of Time, Shou-xing-gong or the God of

Longevity, the Stove God, the San-guan Da-di and others. Most of these deities have their origins in the Taoist tradition.

Therefore, in Chinese folk religion the conceptions of "life" and "death", as well as fate, are based on an orchestra of belief systems. Accordingly, different people may attribute fate and length of life span in different ways. It depends on a person's knowledge and his inclination to these various belief systems. In fact, a person may even make different attributions on different occasions. However, a certain degree of predestination is always assumed. And what is left behind is that one can have a limited power to alter one's life. But, of course, this can be attained to a certain extent only.

As I have just mentioned, it is widely believed that the fate and the life span of a person depends on the deeds he has done in this life and in the life before this. However, he knows nothing exact about his personal history in the life before this and he is fully aware of his impotence to rewrite it. What he can do is to perform virtuous and meritorious deeds in this life in order to be repaid in the rest of this

life and the next life. He can choose among a variety of alternate methods in order to achieve his goal.

One of the methods is that one takes no life of animals or certain animals. A person who makes this type of vow will not kill animals or some specified animals, or will even not allow these animals to be killed in his presence. He may state beforehand that the vow is to be kept for a certain period of time such as one year, or throughout the rest of his life.

Closely related with this is the popular practice of abstention from meat. Under the influence of Buddhism, the Chinese divide the edibles into za and zhai. Za includes all meats and zhai are vegetarian food. However, it should be noted that:

> They have a saying that "among the vegetables are three kinds of meats," and "among the meats are three kinds of vegetables." It means that those who wish and profess to live only on vegetables may nevertheless not eat all kinds of vegetables. There are three species which they are not allowed to eat as vegetarians; these are garlics, onions, and scallions, which are reckoned, on account of their strong taste, as being substantially meats,

> though they are really nothing but vegetables. On the other hand, though they profess to eschew all animal food, yet there are three kinds which they are allowed to eat. These are obtained from salt water, and are believed to be themselves marine animals, or to be the productions of marine animals. On account of an insipid or indifferent taste, these are reckoned as vegetables (Doolittle 1865b:183).

Some people abstain from beef only among the most common kinds of meat for food. It is because the buffalo and the ox as well are praiseworthy in regard to their contribution to the farmers in ploughing. In fact, as noted by Doolittle, neither beef is used as meat-offerings presented to deities in general worship by the people, nor are candles made of buffalo-tallow burnt before images of deities (Doolittle 1865b:187).

Both the practices of not killing animals and abstention from meat are thought to be meritorious deeds and will be repaid with good fortune. Another popular type of meritorious deed is to set captive animals free. The animals, such as tortoises, birds, or fish, which are caught or, more commonly,

deliberately bought for this purpose, are set free to their natural living environment. This practice is called fang-sheng or freeing living creatures. A minor ritual performed by ritual specialists is sometimes associated with it.

An alternate method is to provide the means of support for the animals as long as they may live. This practice is usually made in regard to domestic animals, tortoises, as well as certain kinds of birds and fish. Some people choose to place the animals in a monastery, under the care of the resident priests. This saves themselves much time and any trouble in taking care of the animals and also prevents the animals from being stolen or eaten.

Sometimes the practice is done communally. A common example is the contribution to public works, of which the building or repairing of bridges and roads are the most common types. Very often, the required amount on these occasions is obtained by public subscription. A statement about the reasons for the public works, the names of the subscribers, together with the amount of subscription from each donor, are often inscribed on a stone tablet which is kept at the

site. This kind of practice was common in the past before the establishment of the Public Works Department by the colonial government.

Another common communal practice is found in the celebration of festivities in which rites of gong-de or meritorious deeds are performed. For example, the relief of the ghosts from suffering and the general banquet offered to them in a Da-jiao or the a Yu-lan are thought to be rites of gong-de. In these festivities, all members of the village concerned have to subscribe to the celebration and their names are written on a long piece of red paper called bang or placard (for example, Schipper 1974) which is posted usually on the outer wall of the village temple. At the end of the festivity, the bang is burnt in order for the heavenly deities to receive it and, subsequently, bless all the people who have their names written on the bang. Therefore, in these festivities people subscribe in order to support the rites of gong-de which are commonly accepted as meritorious deeds. In their conception, they believe that they will be repaid with blessings from the heavenly deities.

As I have mentioned before, the celebration of the

birthday of Da-wang in Kam Tsin includes performances of Chinese operas and a Hong-chao ceremony. Although all residents of the village, and even outsiders, are welcome to enjoy the Chinese operas, the Hong-chao is not held for all. The Hong-chao is performed by three Naam-mo-lo accompanied by twelve chao-shou or heads of the audience. During the Hong-chao, the chief chao-shou always holds in his hands a book called yi-wen which includes, besides a statement about the Hong-chao, a name list of all the heads of the household of the Haus. The right to have one's name on the list is exclusive because none of the tenants who are not true members of the Hau zu can enjoy this privilege. The same statement and name list are also written on a long sheet of red paper called ren-yuan-bang, which is posted on the front wall of the village temple during the Hong-chao. At the end of the Hong-chao, both the yi-wen and the ren-yuan-bang are burnt in order that the heavenly spirits can receive it and bless all the households mentioned on the list. Accordingly, only members of the Hau zu can enjoy the favour of the deities. All other people who have donated to the celebration can only have their names and the sum of their subscription written on a separate sheet of red

paper, which is posted on a side wall of the village temple. Interestingly enough, this subscriber list is not burnt at the end of the Hong-chao. This is very significant to the villagers because it implies that the list is written for people to read, rather than for the heavenly spirits. This means that these subscribers who are not true members of the village can only receive the praise from the mortals, but not the blessing from the heavenly spirits.

All these are commonly thought to be meritorious deeds and are considered as deserving of great praise. A person who practises them is referred to have a virtuous heart, and, as a result, he will be repaid in the rest of his life and the next life. The way he will be repaid depends on a lot of factors, such as the significance of the meritorious deeds, his sincerity in doing them, and how he has been behaved in the past. It seems that both the mortals and the immortals have a "calculus" mind in the calculation of goodness and badness.

Furthermore, the relationship between the meritorious deeds and the subsequent repayment in the form of blessing is conceived as a kind of more or less

balanced reciprocal relationship. It is noted that:

> The humans manage their end of things so that the gods are satisfied; the gods are thus obligated to them, and are expected to provide good fortune and other desired goods that can be influenced from the other world. The balanced reciprocity - always a little out of balance, to establish a dynamic relationship - is of the sort discussed by Mauss, Sahlins and others (Anderson 1972:13).

In this sense, merit becomes a kind of medium of exchange. It can be earned by performing various types of meritorious deeds. In most cases, a man who has earned merit for himself is not repaid immediately but in the rest of this life and in the next life. It means that merit can be saved and accumulated until it is used to exchange for blessing. But merit is indeed a very special medium of exchange because it transgresses the boundary between "this life" and the "next life". It is the only form of "goods" that a man can save for his next life. Therefore, merit plays an important role in the understanding of religious behaviour in the study of Chinese folk religion.

NOTES

Introduction:

(1) The Genealogy of the Hau Surname at Kam Tsin Village, New Territories, Hong Kong.

(2) According to Siu (1984:6), the date of settlement is in late Qian-long.

(3) Census Reports in Hong Kong, Sessional Papers by P.P.J. Wodehouse in 1911, Table XIX, Chinese Population of the New Territories by Villages, Sheung Shui District, p. 103. Cited in Tanaka (1985:851).

(4) Block Crown Lease, Demarcation District 92, House Land.

(5) Official map, scale 1:1000, sheet no. 2-SE-10D (full revision in January 1987).

(6) For more details, please refer to Segawa (1986).

Chapter 5:

(1) James Hayes (1969:159) translates it as "child fiancee" to put emphasis on the marital status of the xin-bao-zai. But it should be noted that the Chinese term "xin-bao" literally means "daughter-in-law" rather than "fiancee" and the word "zai" means "child".

(2) In Cantonese, the term for bean (tou) is homophonic with that for smallpox.

(3) Te-jiao is a religious tradition which is in fact a *melange* of the Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian traditions. And among these traditions, it resembles the Buddhist tradition most.

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